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THE BURDENS OF LIFE

BY ALFRED ROWLAND, LL.B., B.A.  
CROUCH END, LONDON







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Alfred Rowland

# THE BURDENS OF LIFE

## AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

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"HALF-HOURS WITH TEACHERS," "PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY," ETC.



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TO MY WIFE  
WHO  
BY HER UNRUFFLED SERENITY  
SOUND JUDGMENT, AND HABITUAL SELF-FORGETFULNESS  
HAS BEEN TO ME AN UNFAILING SOURCE  
OF COMFORT AND INSPIRATION  
I LOVINGLY DEDICATE  
THIS VOLUME

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THE BURDENS OF LIFE

“Every man shall bear his own burden.”—*Gal.* vi. 5.

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## I

### THE BURDENS OF LIFE

AS we grow older life becomes more serious, if not more sad. In our childhood birthdays and other festivals appear like triumphal arches, under which we dance forward to a happier future. But in middle-life they seem only to be milestones marking our progress and reminding us that another and another stage of our shortening journey is ended. And to some a time comes when they are like tombstones, on which are graven memories of "the tender grace of a day that is dead." In spite of this there are many who enjoy a deeper peace, and indulge a fonder hope, as one by one the silent years are passed and left behind, because they look not "at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen"—because they know that the veil which encircles the visible life hides nobler realities and possibilities, for which this earth is but a place of training. Their life is hid with Christ in God, and they know it.

Our present life at times appears so fraught with anxieties and griefs that we are constrained to deny

and repudiate one of Matthew Arnold's dicta or prophecies, that "most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry." The world needs consolations of another and higher kind than those which poetry has to offer, and these consolations arise from trust in a gracious Father-God, who rules everything, and from hope of a happier future, won for us by Jesus Christ, who already reigns in a community where there is no more curse, and where all tears are wiped away. It is when we stagger under the burdens of life that we want to lean on One who can sustain us, and He must be Divine as well as human.

I presuppose, then, that most of us are conscious of burdens which weigh more or less heavily on our hearts ; and the three verses I have read together are God's suggestions as to what we should do with them. Each text has its appropriate application, which we shall try to set before our minds clearly, that we may find the divinely-appointed help which is latent in all of them. Some of us are oppressed by a burden of responsibility, which we cannot shift to other shoulders, but must sustain with cheerful courage ; for in that sense "every man must bear his own burden." Others see their friends struggling with sorrow, or privation, and may help them to new endurance if they obey the command, "Bear ye one another's burdens." And some have laden themselves with anxious fears about the future, till



they are crushed with the weight of them, and to these this message comes from heaven, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." These verses, then, are not contradictory: they are complementary. Each of them has its own special value, but when the three are combined and interwoven they make a threefold cord not easily broken—a strong cable which will hold securely the anchor of the soul, amidst the stress and the storms of life. In this divinely-given trinity there is unity.

The special burdens referred to in this 6th chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians are those which are associated (as many of ours are) with human faults and follies. Paul himself was just now oppressed by grief as he thought of the falling away of his Galatian converts under the influence of Judaizing teachers. His sorrow was the greater because he had loved them well and trusted them completely, and he was not only grieved, but indignant that they should have been led astray so easily and quickly. Yet he wrote to their more faithful comrades in the Church these memorable words: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness"—for he knew from his own experience how easy it was to go wrong, how sad it was to be in the wrong, and how blessed it was to redeem from wrong. Even now, often and sadly enough, a man drifts into a current of evil practices, without seeing anything to

startle or shock him. He glides imperceptibly downwards, like a canoeist on the swift silent stream, who looks at the fair fields, or the swirling water, or the bending reeds, till suddenly, to his horror, he finds himself in the rapids and hears the roaring of the fall. However much he may have been to blame for his carelessness, any one with right feeling would fling him a rope, and while the man himself would pull for dear life with the oars, his friend on the bank would strain every nerve to help him. Even in restoring those who have drifted there is room for help and sympathy ; and in that sense we are able, as Paul implies, to "bear one another's burdens."

But let us broaden out the application which the Apostle here makes of the spirit of our Lord's teaching, and think more generally of the burdens of life, and see what we are to do with them.

I think that our burdens may be roughly divided and classified under three heads—to which these verses, in the order I read them, may be applied. First, there are the burdens of responsibility, which we must largely bear for ourselves ; secondly, the burdens of trouble, in which brotherly sympathy may aid us ; and, thirdly, the burdens of anxiety, which (with many of the former also) we may cast upon the Lord, that we may understand the words we sing,—

"O Lord, how happy should we be  
If we could cast our care on Thee,  
If we from self could rest ;

And feel, at heart, that One above,  
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,  
Is working for the best ! ”

I.—I ask your attention, first, to the truth that there is A BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY assigned to each of us, which cannot be passed on to others, about which we feel the words are true, “Every man shall bear his own burden.”

1. *Think, for example, of your responsibility in regard to your own character.* You are ready, no doubt, to acknowledge that you sometimes do the things which you ought not to do ; but you are conscious of a tendency to throw the responsibility of that wrongdoing on others. It may be true that without choice of yours you found yourself amongst unchristian companions, or under an unscrupulous employer, or in a business which leads you to evil almost of necessity. Little by little your moral sense has become blunted, your standard of life has slipped lower, and you are ready to say : “ It is impossible that I should be a saint. Surely, the New Testament ideal is not the standard by which persons circumstanced as I am will ultimately be judged ? ” Now, remember that whatever your disabilities or disadvantages may be,—and God knows them better than you do,—you have to bear your own burden of responsibility for wrongdoing ; and there is no other law for you or for me, or for any man, than that which you find in this

chapter—"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Or it may be that you are burdened not so much by environment as by tendency—inherited, perchance, from your parents, or even from their parents. There are, no doubt, inborn propensities which you are powerless to eradicate, and which even the grace of God will not change. They will modify the manifestation of your religious life, but they will not alter the standard of it. You cannot convert a Hindoo into a Scandinavian, or a Teuton into a Celt. You cannot make clay into gold, or gold into clay; but whether your native ore be the one or the other, you may make of it a vessel unto honour, or unto dishonour—and it is for this you have a responsibility, of which no one can relieve you. And God's grace is so abundant, so accessible, that you will never have just cause to ask, "Why hast Thou made me thus?" You will never be able to put the responsibility of your own wrongdoing on your parents, or on your God. These are the difficulties over which the Redeemer from sin can cause you to triumph, and the higher the obstacle up which you clamber with His help the nearer heaven will you be when you victoriously surmount it. And as to the sins and failures of the past, you have but to confess them with penitent heart, without trying to palliate or excuse them, and forgiveness will be freely and fully given, for the burden of conscious sin is one of those to which we

may confidently apply the command, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord."

2. *Again, you have responsibility in regard to your beliefs*, which no one can bear for you. It is your boast, perhaps, that you would never submit to an ecclesiastical dictatorship; and yet some of you are satisfied with a traditional creed, which does not contain for you a single living belief; while others never take the trouble to concern themselves about beliefs at all. There is no validity whatever in the excuse that there is uncertainty about matters of Divine law. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself," is as clear as it is fundamental, and is as essential to human blessedness as the law of gravitation is to the earth's rotation. The man who through want of seriousness lives prayerlessly, as if God were not, and pleads as an excuse that there can be no scientific knowledge of God, shall, in the last day, bear his own burden of loss and shame.

"Believe it not,  
The primal duties shine aloft, like stars;  
The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,  
Are scattered at the feet of man, like flowers:  
The generous inclination, the just rule,  
Kind wishes, and good actions and pure thought—  
No mystery is here."

3. *Thirdly, responsibility for service* is a man's own, and cannot be shifted to others. There are those of

you whose lives have been like the life of a butterfly, which flits from flower to flower on a bright summer day, who would be ennobled by some God-sent grief, or heavy burden, which would rouse you to a sense of life's seriousness. For if, with your splendid capacities and frequent opportunities, you leave undone your service for God and for humanity, the issues to yourself, perhaps to others, will be disastrous. Every week we are reminded of the fatal and irremediable results which follow on neglect and carelessness where there is no wilful wickedness at all. The other day a passenger stepped out of a railway carriage on the wrong side and was cut to pieces, and no miracle was wrought to save him, because his action was a mistake. A steamer ran into another vessel with a crash, and brave men were drowned; they did not escape because it was merely an oversight on the part of the watch. And there are crises in your own history, crises in the experiences of those at home, crises in the social changes going on in this country in which you have to take your part, and if you fail, though only through neglect or carelessness, at the day of judgment you will bear your own burden. Nor does association with others justify neglect. I hold that to be true in respect to the exercise of your responsibility as citizens, when men are being chosen to control the affairs of this vast municipality, who will be able to do much for its sobriety, its purity, and its home life. Similarly with the

election of our School Board, the members of which may help or hinder the work of giving a noble and unsectarian education to the poorest child in the metropolis. It will be no excuse for your abstention that other people will attend to these matters. Still less plausible is the suggestion that these are worldly affairs, for which no responsibility falls on the people of God. Above all others, Christians are called upon to claim and dominate the world for Christ.

And if outside the Church, surely within it, you, as a Christian, have personal responsibility. Meetings for prayer may die out if you say of each as it comes: "There is no call for me to be there." The training of children in the nurture of the Lord may gradually cease if the more intelligent Christians think slightingly of our Sunday Schools, and say, "I pray thee have me excused." In short, the world's future will be dark unless you hand down the truth you have received. Virgins of old faithfully tended the Vestal fire, and transmitted it to the hands of their successors; and of the fire on the Jewish altar Jehovah said—It shall never go out. You have received from your fathers what the next generation will need as much as any generation ever needed—glad tidings of great joy. And if those who come after you lose hope in the darkness of Agnosticism through your neglect, the responsibility is yours, for every man shall bear his own burden.

II.—But let us now turn to the second of the verses I read, and deal with it more briefly. There is, I said, A BURDEN OF TROUBLE in which we may find help (or may give help) through sympathy. Hence the words, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

I fear that some people regard Christianity as a faith which only affects their personal salvation. They profess to have obeyed the injunction, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” and being convinced that they are sure of heaven they are satisfied. Their feeling is much like that of a passenger who having insured his life in an accidental insurance company, is comforted by the reflection when he takes his seat in the train that if anything happens he has made provision against injury or death. That is un-Christ-like religion, if, indeed, it may be called Christianity at all ; and I fear that its prevalence has given standing room for Positivism and has emboldened able teachers to declare that what the world now wants is the religion of Humanity. Of course it does ; and Christ Jesus Himself inaugurated the religion of humanity by His ministry and teaching, by His death and resurrection, and by the gift of His Holy Spirit. But humanitarianism, without that Divinity behind it and within it, is helpless as a dead statue. It is under the Cross of Christ, upon which He gave Himself for the life of the world, that we learn



best to bear one another's burdens, and there we gain inspiration to do it.

This Christian law applies to all troubles in which we can help each other, even though it be only by sympathy. Indeed, sympathy is itself a real source of solace. Have you never found it so? Possibly you remember a time when you were little more than a boy, or girl, and were sorely, but secretly, troubled over some unattainable good, or over your enthralled affections, or over your religious difficulties—it matters not what. One evening, when you were sitting with your mother, whom you knew you could trust, talk became low and earnest, and your confidence seemed silently invited. Then, with faltering lips and flushed face, you told your whole story; and to this day you remember how the loving eyes filled with tears of pity, and you felt the quiet pressure of her hand, and then wise counsel was given, or, at least, an assurance of sympathy. You were relieved and comforted, though you hardly knew how or why. Well, that night your mother in prayer might have thanked God that she had been taught of Him to help you bear your burdens.

Have you learnt that lesson in relation to others? Are you so true that any one might trust you? So loving that comparative strangers may venture to make a friend of you? Because, if you be, you are, to that extent, a representative of your gracious,

winsome Lord, who said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Nor did He speak in vain.

The modes in which this mandate may be carried out are manifold. One of the easiest and most frequent is to distribute to the necessities of others, and few things have cheered me more than to see half a dozen friends volunteer to stand by me while we take on ourselves for the next six years all the responsibility for the education and nurture of a little orphan lad, unknown to any one of us by face. In such ways we can and do bear one another's burdens, and far more often and far more generously is this done by poor folk, who constantly help others poorer than themselves.

But some of you value your time more than your money, and never at greater sacrifice do you obey this command than when you spend an hour in talking over difficulties and giving wise counsel to one who has but little of your capacity, judgment, and experience. Angels see and rejoice over much work of that kind done by professional men, and by men of business, whose names, perhaps, are not down for large subscriptions to religious societies—because they have brains rather than money—and yet they truly help men to bear their burdens.

Indeed, I know some who soothe sorrow marvelously, though they do not appear to do much more than listen patiently and sympathetically to a tale

of distress, or to a confession of wrong-doing. "It soothes poor misery, hearkening to her tale;" and sometimes listening does more than quoting texts or delivering a discourse on the uses of affliction.

Ask God to give you a tender heart, a responsive and sympathetic nature, for in this you may be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, though you are not naturally gentle; and if you cannot do very much to help others, at least do what you can among the suffering and sorrowful at any cost. I remember reading one day in the newspaper of a lance-corporal named Joseph John Farmer, who won the Victoria Cross by his self-abnegation and courage during an engagement with the Boers of the Transvaal. When they were fast closing in on the British force, he held a white flag over the wounded, till the arm that held it was shot through. "Thank God, I've got another arm!" cried the brave fellow, and up went the white flag again till that arm also, pierced by a bullet, fell helpless at his side. I thought, as I read that simple tale of heroism, how few of us have done for our fellow-Christians what that soldier did for his comrades, and how few have done for Christ what scores and hundreds do for honour. Oh! that we may be inspired by the love of Christ, and then this motto will be our daily inspiration, in the homes of sorrow, and even in the haunts of sin, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

III.—But it yet remains for me to point out that there are some BURDENS WE CANNOT BEAR OURSELVES, and which no one on earth can bear for us. About any one of these comes the gracious message, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.”

It is this which makes our message from heaven a veritable Gospel. “Every man shall bear his own burden” might be the stern utterance of a Stoic who nerves himself with set lips and frowning brow to endure the inevitable as it confronts him. “Bear ye one another’s burdens” might seem to come appropriately from some teacher of humanitarianism, whose chief error is that he vaunts as a new gospel what is only an imperfect rendering of the old—laying stress as he does on the second and lesser command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” But we want more than either of these can tell us when the burdens of life press heaviest. Then we long for the assurance that a personal God loves us more than a father loves his children, that He is controlling all that happens, and directing it towards our highest good—then we long for the assurance that behind all the half-understood mysteries of life a loving heart is beating, and that whatever the gloom around us here, God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. And He has come near to us in Jesus Christ, who was the express image of His Person. We see Him feeding the hungry on the mountain-side, when no other provision was near—

bringing health to weary sufferers and hope to their weeping friends, and entering the home darkened by death with the joyful declaration, "He that believeth in Me shall never die." What we want in order to face our present troubles bravely, and to have our hearts kept quiet from fear of evil in the future, is intimate association with Him who is the Consoler of Israel. Our life would be blessed indeed if we could but say, as good Mr. Hewitson did, "I think I know more of Jesus Christ than of any earthly friend"; a man of whom a friend of his said, "One thing always strikes me in him—he seems to have no gaps, no intervals in his communion with God." How different it is with us! How sadly fellowship with our Lord is interrupted by our bustling activities, by our doubts, or by our worldliness; and, therefore, sometimes a sorrow comes which we cannot bear alone, beneath which no human sympathy seems to help us much; and thus we are brought in penitence and trust to the feet of our changeless Friend, and obey the old command, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."

I am sure that He will not fail us, although we may have been too long indifferent and self-reliant; and although it seems even to ourselves shameful that we should turn to Him, as if He were our last resort. His mercy endureth for ever. I have heard that a poor hunted hare, almost exhausted by her desperate efforts to escape the hounds, actually ran

to a man for shelter and protection as he was quietly walking in the roadway. If I had been in his place—if I were thus trusted by a poor dumb, helpless, hunted creature, I should pity it, and take it up in my arms, and carry it away to safety, though hounds and hunters lost their track and their temper. For I should say to myself, "This timid creature trusted me, and I should be less than a man if I failed to meet such confidence." And will not He who is all-pitiful—whose sympathy for our sorrows was revealed in the days of His gracious ministry—pity and comfort us, His children, in our times of sore need, when with all our heart we say, "I flee unto Thee to hide me"?

The time of deliverance from all anxiety and grief is coming, and then we shall understand, as now we cannot, the meaning of the losses, and fears, and troubles which now perplex and harass us. Meanwhile, we may go in prayer to Him whose Presence makes heaven restful, and who can cheer in solitude and strengthen to endurance as the dearest earthly friend can never do.

"Bear Thou my sorrow, Thou who bear'st my sin,  
Both are too heavy, Lord, for me to bear :  
O take them, call them Thine ;—yes, Thine, though mine,  
And give me calm repose in hours of fear and care.  
Beneath the load of crosses and of cares,  
Of thwarted plans, of rude and spiteful words,  
O bear me up, when the weak flesh despairs,  
And the one arm which faith can lean on is the Lord's."

THE HAPPINESS OF GOD

“The blessed God.”—1 *Tim.* i. 11.



## II

### THE HAPPINESS OF GOD

IT seems a pity that, when a Revised Version of the Bible was prepared by some of our best scholars in this latter half of the nineteenth century, distinctions between words which are evident enough in the original Hebrew or Greek were not more accurately marked. We have one example of such neglect in this passage. Two distinct Greek words are used in the New Testament, both of which, in the Revised Version as in the Authorised Version, are rendered by the same English word, "blessed." One of these words is *εὐλογητός*, which means "to be well spoken of." It occurs in Romans ix. 5, in the phrase translated "God blessed for ever," *i.e.* God who is to be lauded and adored for ever. You will find another example of its use in Ephesians i. 3, where, with a heart overrunning with praise, Paul exclaims, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," *i.e.* may He be praised and worshipped. The word so rendered in these passages is not used in this, but quite another, *μακάριος*, which properly means "happy." Thus in the Sermon on the Mount our Lord employs it when He begins "Blessed (or

happy) are the poor in spirit." Again, in His commendation of Simon Peter, as recorded in Matthew xvi. 17, He exclaimed, "Happy (μακάριος) art thou, Simon Bar-Jona"; and in Revelation xxii. 14 we read, "Happy (μακάριοι) are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and enter in by the gates into the city."

It is noteworthy that in my text the inspired apostle chooses this latter word, which may be rendered "happy," because, to speak of "the happy God" may seem to some, at first sight, almost irreverent. We all recognise that He is "blessed," as being the object of praise and adoration; but He is more than this, for Paul means that God is the Possessor of personal happiness, just as truly as of wisdom, power, and love. And this is included in what Paul calls here "sound doctrine," which is opposed to sickly sentimentalism on the one hand, and to vain janglings of theological controversialists on the other hand. He declares that it is in accordance with "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," or, more correctly, with "the Gospel of the glory of the happy God."

Nothing is more likely to inspire us with hope than the knowledge of this fact—that our God is infinitely happy, and longs that all His creatures should be happy too. Such a Gospel can be found nowhere else. Apart from the Divine revelation, philosophy

has spoken of the Deity as "the impassive and unthinkable essence," as the "great unknown and unknowable," as "the tendency outside ourselves which makes for righteousness."

But distinct from all this, and superior to all this, is the Christian revelation that our God is consciously happy, and seeks, even at the greatest sacrifice, to secure the eternal happiness of His children, from which only sin keeps them back.

Therefore we Christians do not tremble in the presence of a dread-inspiring God; One who gazes on us with fixed, stony indifference, like those Egyptian deities which sit calm and pitiless, with their idle hands on their laps, and their lidless eyes staring out over the sands. Our God is "happy," gracious, winsome, loving, and but for the sinfulness of our nature we should rest and rejoice in Him.

I would have you notice that it is this which constitutes "the Gospel of the glory of God," as it comes to us through Jesus Christ. We instinctively worship *power*, and imagine that if we enlarge it to infinity, that must be the glory of God. But Jesus Christ teaches us that the heart of Deity is not power, but love; and that the "Gospel," or "good news of His glory," is that He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. And hence it is that the highest revelation of Him is given in the life of a man—patient, meek, despised, and rejected, yet

loving to the very heart of Him ; and in the exercise and display of this love He finds His own bliss. That is the teaching of our text.

I. Before we go further, let us inquire where through Scripture, or apart from it, we are to find revelations of the inmost character of the God we adore ?

Surely not in the material world, however magnificent its splendour and resistless its forces, but in *man*, and most clearly of all in the Divine Man. The more I read the Scriptures the more I am convinced that in religious teaching human analogies are far more helpful than metaphysical abstractions. It is the fashion with some to sneer at Old Testament phrases which speak of God as One who has an ear to listen, and a heart to feel ; but those of us who have seen "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" are bold to affirm that psalmists and prophets were far nearer to the truth than modern philosophers, who have largely lost faith in God because they have studied matter and forgotten man.

If, for example, you would know whether God will hear and answer prayer, you will discover more by asking your own fatherly heart what you would do for your child than by discussing laws which rule physical phenomena apart from personal will and love.

Or, if you would know something about the happi-

ness of God, you will draw from your own nature contrasts or analogies, you will study your own consciousness, and then will intensify and enlarge your ideas till they reach out towards the infinite. You remember that Paul, in his address to the Athenians, taught them what they ought *not* to think of God, because of what they knew about themselves ; and he implied that by the same study of ourselves we may learn what we *ought* to think of Him.

It is a false theology which would lead us to forget that to a certain extent, and in some respects, we bear a likeness to God. Hence what we know of ourselves gives us conceptions of Him which are true as far as they go ; although beyond these there are heights of happiness and depths of love in the Infinite nature, which must remain utterly out of our reach. And because by our sinfulness our nature is marred, and the mirror is so defaced and defiled that the reflection of the Divine image is hopelessly blurred, there has come into the world in the person of Jesus Christ one perfect Man, who was also the only-begotten, well-beloved Son of the unseen Father, who was able to say, " He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

" The Gospel of the glory of the happy God is in *Jesus Christ*."

II. Having seen the line of thought we must take in order that, led by the Spirit of God, we may know

something of God's nature, let us try, secondly, to discover wherein this Divine happiness consists.

Here we must distinguish between things that differ. In our own human experience we know that "happiness" and "bliss" may be distinct from each other; *e.g.*, a favourable conjunction of circumstances, brought about by a combination of good health, abundant means, and general popularity, may make a man very "happy," although he may know nothing at all of "bliss," which belongs to the spiritual nature. Blessedness is happiness, and something more, because it is not dependent on outward environment. It belongs to the man's inner self, and will be his whether he is in the body or out of the body.

But we need not distinguish thus with God, because with Him the inward and the outward perfectly accord. Both condition and character in Him combine to make Him essentially and eternally "the happy God." What makes our happiness fitful and transient can never limit the bliss of Him whom we adore.

1. *For example, we are often troubled by our ignorance.* We are liable to mistakes, and are perplexed by uncertainty. But the happy God is "clothed with light as with a garment," invested with the radiance of perfect knowledge. He is "the only wise God"—the God of knowledge—"whose understanding is infinite." All that we boast of keen intuition, wonderful memory, startling inven-

tions, art, eloquence, learning, are merely the feeble and imperfect reflections of what abides in the Divine mind. The happiness of knowing is His to a degree and extent of which we have but the faintest conception. And this knowledge with Him is inherent, acquired by no labour, marred by no error, limited by no mystery; "all things are naked and open before Him with whom we have to do."

The light of His infinite knowledge is not fed from without, as the sun becomes a source of light from the impact upon it of objects pouring in from space; but God's light is underived. He is (as James says) "the *Father* of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning"; and is the centre of bliss and rest to all the universe of knowledge which circles around Him.

2. Secondly, by way of another contrast, let me ask you to remember how *our happiness is marred by inability to do what we gladly would*; but what do we read of Him? "He works all things according to the counsel of His own will." He is excellent in working, as well as wonderful in counsel; and in regard to all created things "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood forth." Things are the incarnation of God's thought. They are to Him what the words and letters you write are to you; and the starry heavens are His illuminated missal, proclaiming His glory.

Besides, He rules over all things, needing no

rest, knowing no tiredness, upholding all things by the word of His power. And since His wisdom is perfect He can never experience anything of our misery, mistakes and failures.

His happiness is perfect, and all who see aright adore Him as they sing : "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty : just and true are all Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

Dr. Watts well puts the contrast between man and God in the familiar verses :

"Our lives through various scenes are drawn,  
And vexed with trifling cares ;  
But Thine eternal thought moves on  
Thine undisturbed affairs.

Great God, how infinite art Thou !  
What worthless worms are we !  
Let the whole race of creatures bow  
And bring their praise to Thee."

3. But the happiness of God consists not only in perfect knowledge, and tireless, faultless activity, but also, and chiefly in this, that He *is absolutely good* ; as our Lord reminded us when He said to the young ruler, "there is none good but One, that is God." He never knows what it is to have an uprising of sin to repress. He has never been overcome of evil, or for a moment been deceived by it ; and, therefore, has no remorse and no painful remembrances to disturb His serenity. All that is in His



own nature, and all the results from His own ceaseless activities, must give Him satisfaction.

Indeed, even so far as this world is concerned, where sin has entered and disordered His design, He must rejoice over "the Gospel of His glory" because it means the possibility of salvation proffered to every one who has fallen; and in the exercise of His redeeming mercy He finds an increase of His Divine happiness. The success of that work has been truly and emphatically called by an inspired prophet "*the* pleasure of the Lord."

We have thus been thinking of some sources of pleasure, but we must not forget that these are infinitely more than all we can imagine. In fact, just as the horizon, when we approach the point where heaven seems to touch earth, rises and broadens, revealing new stretches of land and sea, so when our thoughts journey towards the infinite we discover depths and heights beyond our reach. What happiness may come to God from the bliss of numberless worlds, in comparison with which our earth is only as a mote in the air, or as a drop to the sea, we cannot tell. What joy may arise in His heart from the willing and perfect service of angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, is beyond our powers of conception. What delight He may have in communicating to His creatures the light, the love, and the joy which find their home and centre in Himself, it is not for us to describe.

He is infinitely happy, because He is always loving, always giving, and ever rejoicing over His creatures with singing.

III. *But, it may be asked, What has all this to do with us?* Our world is miserable enough, at all events, and to be assured that the God who made it and rules it is Himself happy seems to us a mockery, like the play of sunshine and the song of birds to those who weep over an open grave. Yet Paul assures us that this is a "gospel," that it is "good news" for us, and it surely is. Because it proclaims the fact that this world is not as God meant it to be, nor as He means it to be. The revelation we have here is not of a God lapped in ease, serenely contemplating from afar the struggles and sorrows of His creatures, but of God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, redeeming it from sin and misery at an infinite cost. Himself supremely happy, because supremely good, He seeks and strives to make us good, that we may be happy too. As we look back through the dark vista of human history we are deafened by the clash of strife and the moaning of pain, but amidst it all we hear the footfall of the Deliverer, who comes to heal, and save, and bless.

The life of Jesus on earth reveals, as in a microcosm, what has been, and still is, taking place among human souls. God has not left us alone. He has not suffered the holy ones around Him to absorb

His interest and affection, but He thinks and yearns over the one prodigal world which is so slow to repent and return. The planets nearest to the sun are saturated with solar brightness, but His rays steal out through the ether, and not even the most distant planet in the system is left in the dark. In this world so far off by wicked works, God has lived, and lives still; indeed, the light of His love is only kept out by our sins and unbelief. Take down the shutters and let the sunshine in, and in His light you shall see light, in His joy you shall find joy.

Do you not see, then, that *sin is a far more serious* and dreadful thing than you have supposed? It cuts you off from sympathy and fellowship with the holy and happy God; in other words, it debars you from the bliss which is possible to you, which we call "heaven." You have capacity for it, you are conscious of stirrings of desire for it, but you do not enjoy it because of sin, for what communion hath light with darkness?

Indeed, I may go so far as to say that sin, in this world, is the one thing in the universe which affects the happiness of God, and it is this fact which makes credible to some of us the intervention of God to deliver us from it, as seen in the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection, and the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those men were inspired by the Spirit, which leads into all truth, when they wrote that when God saw the wickedness of men "it

grieved Him at His heart"; and, again, that sin "grieves the Spirit of God," and that He is moved to anger by it. I know that this is probably a human way, and therefore an imperfect way, of expressing the truth; but behind those strong and strange words lies the fact that the world's sin—your sin and mine—breaks in on the happiness of God.

If this be true, is it any wonder that Christ Jesus, the Son of the Blessed, died in order to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? Then shall we any longer continue in it? Will *you*? Is there not a fresh call to repentance to-day arising from the truth we have thought about? If the essence of Divine happiness, of heaven's happiness, lies in freedom from sin, then forgiveness on repentance, and growing holiness through self-consecration, are the two things required from each of us who would enter that sphere and share its bliss. Physical beauty will fade, intellectual strength will break down, but a cleansed soul has before it a future of bliss in the presence of the blessed God.

THE MODESTY OF TRUE GREATNESS

“Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.”—*John* i. 40.

### III

#### THE MODESTY OF TRUE GREATNESS

THE Lord Jesus Christ drew to Himself men of various types and of different gifts. He was not like the demagogue who appeals to the passions of the ignorant, nor was He like the philosopher who can only be appreciated by men of cultivated intelligence. Wherever there was sincerity, whether in men or women, whether in rich or poor, He appealed to it, and found in it loyal response. "He that is of the truth," said He, "heareth My voice." If it were not for the prejudices which obscure men's vision, the sins which hold them back from obedience to the prompting of their consciences, and the folly of the Church in putting other things between the soul and Christ, we should still see a wonderful fulfilment of His words—"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." It matters not how great the variety there may be among the objects lying on your table, in their shapes and uses—be they knives, or nails, or ornaments—if only the

right metal be in them, a powerful magnet, set in their midst, will stir them all, and soon gather them about itself.

It was partly in order to show us this power of Christ to draw men of all sorts and conditions to Himself that such variety was observable among the Twelve Apostles, whom He chose to be with Him. The leading types of human character are presented in those men who formed the nucleus of the Christian Church—reminding us that there is a place for every man in the Lord's service, whatever his bent and gifts.

Let us glance for a few minutes at the brotherhood in which Andrew found a place, before we try to understand his special characteristics and functions, so far as they are revealed to us.

The most cursory reader of the New Testament must have noticed that the Twelve Apostles are divided into three groups of four each, in every list of them given by the inspired writers ; and although the names are not always in exactly the same order, we never find an Apostle mentioned in another group than that to which he belonged. This arrangement, therefore, was habitual, and was evidently ordained by the Lord Himself—Peter invariably coming first, and Judas Iscariot as constantly last.

When we carefully consider each one of these groups, we find it consists of men who were distinguished by some common characteristic, however



much they differed in other respects. The first group consists of the natural leaders of their brethren—the men of largest gifts and intensest fervour, capable of guiding and inspiring their comrades and the Church at large. These were Peter and Andrew, the sons of Jona, and James and John, the sons of Zebedee: two pairs of distinguished brothers. In the second group we find men of a reflective, if not of a sceptical, turn of mind; men who required proof for everything, but who having received it were tenacious of what they knew and believed—in short, rationalists, rather than intuitionists. Their names were Philip and Thomas, Nathanael and Matthew. Then, lastly, you recognise in the third group what we should call the practical men, with business capacity; with keen eye to see promptly what was best to be done—James and Jude, Simon and Judas Iscariot.

All these gifts are wanted in the Church still; and the hand must not say to the head, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the heart, I have no need of thee. There are in the Church men of originality and of commanding faculty, enthusiastic and capable, who lead others in some attack on vice, or in some advance of truth into new realms; men who sometimes blunder and fall, as Peter did, but necessary, inspired and raised up of God for their own work; the men who fire the shot in the mine, though an explosion follow, enabling patient

workers to do their service afterwards. And besides these, we may thank God for thinkers and writers, who are familiar with mental conflict, who have themselves fought their doubts and gathered strength, who become defenders of the faith, and give clearness of conception to those who, without them, would have a very nebulous belief. Nor must we forget the third class (though in the present day we are least likely to forget them, for they are the most numerous)—those, namely, who are men of affairs; practical organizers; who see what is best to be done, or possible to be done; men who sometimes save a John from being too visionary, or a Peter from being too rash.

It is rarely that you get the qualities of all these in one man; indeed, you *never* get them combined in any degree of perfection—the enthusiasm, the thoughtfulness, and the common sense; and we must, therefore, be patient with each other when any one of these gifts is in excess; just as the Master, in His graciousness, allowed for it among His Twelve Apostles. You thoughtful, cautious Christians must not hotly condemn the zealous enthusiast who does what to your cooler judgment seems unwise; you active workers ought not to be impatient with brethren who are slower to see their way to conviction about Christian truth; and you intelligent students have no right to sneer at those who are working while you are thinking. “Who art thou that judgest an-

other man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."

Let me now ask you to turn from the consideration of the three groups, in order to look more closely into the first and most important of them. Those four men—Peter and Andrew, James and John—were probably richer in natural gifts, in force of character, and in fervid zeal for their Lord, more impetuous and adventurous, than their brethren; and they have been very fitly described as "the Boanergic group."

It is noteworthy that, although the group consisted of two sets of brothers, the natural relationship was overridden by the spiritual. Thus Peter's companion was not his brother Andrew, but John; while John's brother was Andrew's comrade. Perhaps natural gifts had something to do with this:—Peter and John go together as the speakers and teachers, from first to last; while Andrew and James often appear as men of action and affairs. Peter comes to the front if anything has to be said; Andrew, if anything has to be done. And the companion of each seems to have supplemented his comrade: John, for example, having a more reflective nature than Peter, working more through his heart's love; while Peter worked more through his will's energy.

But, besides this distribution of gifts which cemented friendship between the Apostles, making

their fellowship closer than that which each had with his own brother, there seems to be a natural tendency for a man to love and associate with one outside the family circle more than with any one in it. When a young Christian wishes to avow his love to Christ, it is not always (perhaps not often) that he first speaks of it to his own parents, or brothers, or sisters, even though he may be quite confident of their sympathy; and when Christians engage in religious work, they often do best with those who are outside their home life. A keen observer has said: "One can begin so many things with a new person! even begin to be a better man!" It is most true! and if you are cut adrift at any time from former associates, whether by school duties or by business changes, remember it is a God-given opportunity for you to start afresh on a new course, if the old one has given you cause for grief or shame. May you find, as the Apostles did, in well-chosen Christian comradeship, that which will draw out what is noblest and best in you; that you may walk worthy of your vocation.

It is, however, time that we concentrated our thought upon the one man in the Boanergic group of whom we know least; and, in order to see him as he was, we must let all the rays of light we have converge upon him. It is not only interesting, but very instructive and inspiring, to take one man's character for special consideration. We may learn

more of ourselves by that process than by any dissertations on the history of a community. When we want to understand botany we are not content to walk through a forest, or to gaze on a garden, or even on a tree or flower,—but we take one blossom, or leaf, dissect and analyse it, and put it under the microscope. From that one specimen we know more of the structure of plants than by walking through all the gardens and greenhouses within our reach. When we gaze on a chart of stars which shows them in their millions, we learn far less about the life of worlds than we do when we see a photograph of Saturn in its vigorous youth, or of our moon in its state of desolation and death. Out of this galaxy of brilliant lights forming the Apostolate, let us single out the one of which we know least.

Andrew was the first, or possibly the second, disciple Jesus ever had; and it was a proof of his strength of character that before any one else had acknowledged Jesus to be Messiah, or had even suspected that He could be, he left his master, John the Baptist, and went with John, the son of Zebedee, to follow Jesus. From that day till the hour of his death he was faithful to the Lord he loved.

Well does Alford say,—

“Of all the honours man may wear,  
Of all his titles proudly stored,  
No lowly palm this name shall bear—  
‘The first to follow Christ the Lord.’

Such name thou hast, who didst incline,  
 Fired with the great Forerunner's joy,  
 Homeward to track the steps divine,  
 And watch the Saviour's best employ.

Lord, give to us, Thy servants, grace  
 To hear whene'er Thy preachers speak ;  
 When Thou commandest, ' Seek My face,'  
 Thy face in earnest hope to seek.

Thus, with the glorious company  
 Of Thine Apostles may we raise,  
 Through all eternity to Thee,  
 Glad hymns of never-ending praise."

There are two great truths worthy of prayerful consideration which appear to be exemplified by the slight records given us of Andrew's life and character. In the first place it throws light :—

#### I.—ON THE DUTY OF BEING CONTENT WHEN OTHERS OUTSHINE US.

We have already seen that Andrew stood in the first group of the disciples ; and have given reasons for thinking that this priority was not due simply to the fact that he was the earliest called, but to his possession of natural gifts and religious fervour. He never appears to have disgraced his position, as Peter did, and he was never deposed from it, for after the ascension of the Lord he held the same dignified place. Yet you must have noticed that he was not always, perhaps we may say he was not usually, among the most privileged. From the highest mani-

festations of the Lord's power, and from the lowest depths of His grief, Andrew was excluded. When Jesus went in to raise the daughter of Jairus from the dead ; when, on the Mount of Transfiguration, He held converse with Moses and Elias ; and again, when He was in an agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, —alone of the four, Andrew was not present, but it is expressly said, "Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John." It seems a little hard on him that even in our text he is spoken of as "Simon Peter's brother"—for this was not only before Simon Peter had become a leader of the Apostles, but before he had heard the Messiah had appeared ; indeed, if it had not been for his less brilliant brother he might never have come to Jesus at all. It is not flattering to be spoken of as "So-and-So's brother," or "Mrs. So-and-So's husband," as if one were only a small satellite revolving in the light of a greater luminary. I say there was something pathetic about the attitude of Andrew, who was numbered among the Boanergic group, yet again and again was shut out from their higher privileges.

We know too little of him to say certainly why this was so. Probably there was something lacking in his nature, which made him less fit for the highest revelations,—and, judging from his intimacy with Philip, the head of the second group, it may well have been that there was a tendency to doubt and hesitation, which prevented his following the Lord

to the loftiest summits of faith. Certainly the Lord knew Andrew perfectly, and loved him well, nor would He have withheld from him any gift or revelation from a feeling of partiality to his brethren, but only because He saw that he was not ready for it, or able to turn it to good account. For our Lord and Master gives us all we are able to receive, but never calls us to duties which we are not fit to perform.

Still, the position was a trying one. Let us suppose, by way of example, that you started in life brilliantly, and once had expectations of occupying a foremost place,—but through accident or through wrong you had to give up your early dreams, and became a very average man indeed ; it is not easy to be content with such things as you have. To be not a master and capitalist, but only an employee, liable to dismissal, with no chance of a rise, looking forward to drudgery till death, is often as great a martyrdom as a few hours' agony at the stake. But it is all in the Lord's hands, and He knows what is best for us ; and we must remember that the end of His work in us is not seen here, for this world after all is only the training school for higher service. Watch against the temptations incident to such a position, whether you occupy it in school or in business. Repress the rising jealousy of your more successful companion ; learn to rejoice in some one else's reward, though you only just missed winning it ; thank God for the



special opportunity you have for cultivating humility about yourself, and generosity towards others, for these graces will make you more like Jesus.

There are plenty of great men besides those talked of in the world. Popularity and prominence are no good tests of worth. You can hardly read the biography of any distinguished man without finding evidence that he knew some one whom he considered (perhaps rightly considered) more able than himself: senior wrangler or double first-class man, whose fame did not get far outside the college quadrangle. No one knows why this friend did not reach the front rank, but he never did. Perhaps it was the result of diffidence, or awkwardness, or self-distrust, or early disappointment, or unworldliness, or want of readiness to take at its flood the tide which leads to fortune. The world gives scant justice to such men,—and the Church too, for that matter,—not from any desire to be unjust, but because men are too busy to stop and look out for such worth as does not naturally come to the front. But we rejoice that the Lord, whom some of these quietly serve, knows all about this; and He who is the true and final Judge recognises the real worth of every one, and appreciates at its fullest quiet, unostentatious service—that done, for example, by a clever woman who expends on the petty cares of the home the ability which might rule a nation, or that of a brave worker who here receives no meed of

applause, but who will not fail to hear from the Master, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Now let us deal briefly with the second truth illustrated by Andrew's life. Having spoken on being content when others outshine us, let me say a few words—

## II.—ON QUIET WORK IN BRINGING OTHERS TO JESUS.

There is no evidence that Andrew was a great preacher, but he was one of the most successful winners of souls the world ever had. He began work directly he found the Messiah. "*He first goeth and findeth his own brother Simon.*" It would be well if that example had been generally followed, if every brother had led his brother to Jesus, and every family had formed an unbroken circle of disciples around Him. But too often it is in the home we are most silent. Our reserve increases with the nearness of the person we ought to speak to, and many a Christian has shown least fidelity where his responsibility is greatest. Brothers, sisters, you have responsibility which no one can take from you; which no one can share with you. And if you love the Saviour, I beseech you to speak (or at least to write) to those you love about the claims of Jesus. It may be that thus you may win, as Andrew did, one for whom the whole world will thank God; for he little thought, when he said to Simon, "We have found Messiah," that he was doing an act for which

the Church would have eternal cause for thankfulness. The insignificant and feeble may thus, through others, do a work which will fill heaven with praise.

On the second occasion when Andrew was prominent he did precisely the same sort of service. A vast multitude had gathered around the Lord. They were hungry, and His loving heart was full of compassion for them ; but it was through the use of what His disciples already had that He would satisfy the poor with bread. He noticed that Philip, in his thoughtful way, was already reckoning up how much it would cost to feed them ; and no sooner did He ask the question than the disciple was ready despairingly to say, " 300 pence (£7 of our money) would not be enough." It was practical Andrew whose eye caught sight of a little boy who had overheard Philip's remark ; it was Andrew who in an instant saw the lad's half-formed wish, " I wonder whether the few loaves and fish I have would be of any service to the dear Master." Cannot you imagine the sense, half of shame, in the lad at the presumptuous thought within him ? But there was a kindness about Andrew that gave him hope that the small gift might be offered ; and when he was timidly shrinking back, I think Andrew took him by the hand, like a big elder brother, and said, " O Lord, there is a boy here who has two loaves and a few fishes, but what are they among so many ? " There was no saying how far they might go, if they

went into the hands of Him who had made the water wine! and the beginning of that wonderful miracle was found in Andrew's kindly introduction of a little boy.

Why, that boy's work is what you may do, dear children! Offer to the Lord what you have, of love and thought, of resolve and service; and He will not spurn it, but will make more of it and more of you, here and hereafter, than you now dare to hope. And let those who are older think of Andrew's work, and lead the lads and girls to Jesus, that their first fears may be conquered, and that their gifts may be employed in His service.

“ Quick eye had Andrew. He it was amid  
The thronging multitudes that marked the lad,  
And what his basket, and how much it had.  
‘ Two fishes small and loaves of barley five’  
Rewarded eye, to trivial things alive—  
In that poor basket what rich mercy hid !

A brother's heart had Andrew. Joy beyond  
All joy to him, the promised Christ to find ;  
But heavenly joy may not to duty blind ;  
He cannot rest, his bliss is incomplete  
Till Simon sits with him at Jesus' feet—  
His brother then by more than natural bond.

Oh, happy they with Andrew's eye, to heed  
A lad and his scant business in the throng,  
Nor by high scorn to do his efforts wrong.  
And happy they with heart that will not rest  
Till in their bliss their brother too is blest ;  
What joy a Peter to the Lord to lead.”

This was not the last of Andrew's recorded services. On the Tuesday before our Lord was crucified certain Greeks wanted to see Jesus, who just before had cleansed the Temple, and declared it was God's house "for all nations." They addressed themselves first to Philip, whose Greek name might have led them to hope for sympathy from him; and he at once asked Andrew to introduce them, probably because he was known to have a happy faculty for leading others into the presence of the Lord, a faculty an angel might covet! Thus the first fruits of a glorious harvest were ingathered, and Jesus, seeing all it involved, said, "Now is the Son of man glorified!" What higher honour could be ours than that which was given to Andrew! Well may we pray for the tact, the moral courage, and the loyal love to the Master, which will prepare us also to take others by the hand and lead them one by one to the Saviour's feet; and as he who began with his own brother, and then took a little lad, was permitted afterwards to bring the representatives of the West to the world's Saviour, some who begin at home to talk with the lads and girls about the Lord we love may have higher duties in the coming future.

But before we can lead others to Him we must ourselves come to Him, with the promptitude and self-surrender Andrew showed, who directly John said, "Behold the Lamb of God," arose and followed Jesus. Let us then close our meditation by the

prayer which many of our fellow-Christians join in on Saint Andrew's Day: "Almighty God, who didst give such grace unto Thy holy Apostle Saint Andrew that he readily obeyed the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him without delay ; grant unto us all, that we, being called by Thy holy Word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil Thy holy commandments, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

THE DRINK CURSE OF ENGLAND

“Woe to the . . . drunkards.”—*Isa.* xxviii., part of verse 1.



#### IV

### THE DRINK CURSE OF ENGLAND<sup>1</sup>

THE prophets were men inspired by God to reveal and enforce moral and religious truth. It was their privilege to understand more clearly than others understood the character of God and His purposes in regard to the human race. On the other hand, it was their duty to remind men of their responsibilities both towards God and their fellows, and in the discharge of this duty they took views so wide as to embrace all the relationships of life. Trade and commerce, politics and sociology, national alliances and wars, literature and religion—all were included in their survey. The exacting employer and the self-indulgent employee; judges whose palms itched for bribes, and priests who undertook sacred functions for the sake of honour and emolument; rich men who were tyrannical and exacting, and poor men who blasphemed God and the king; drunkards, adulterers, liars, and cheats—all in turn came under the prophet's lash, wielded by an arm

<sup>1</sup> An Address delivered at a Monthly People's Service.

strong in the power of Divine conviction. True prophets were not men who would speak with bated breath because they feared either the anger of the Court or the hatred of the mob. Their own popularity or comfort was never thrown as a weight into the scale to be carefully balanced against the results of their fidelity ; and no man now is worthy of being called a servant of God or an ambassador for Christ, who will shrink from rebuking iniquity or proclaiming truth regardless of personal consequences. May the fidelity and straightforward simplicity of those prophets be granted to all Christian teachers the world over, that with tenderness, yet with the most absolute faithfulness, they may show the people their sins, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear !

The Church has the right to look to its teachers for leadership in such matters. More than others they enjoy opportunities for studying the laws which God has given for man's life on earth, and from their more distant standpoint they ought to discern more clearly the advance or defeat of the powers of darkness. An officer who gallops to the summit of a little knoll in the crisis of a battle, as Lord Raglan did in the battle of the Alma, ought to know how the fight is going on better than those encircled by its smoke. Indeed, this leadership may be fairly demanded of men who have the spiritual elevation of fellowship with God, as well as the comparative inde-

pendence of those who are chiefly onlookers in regard to certain phases of the conflict. When, therefore, Christian teachers, in ever-growing numbers, regardless of denominational distinctions, are found lifting up their voices against any national habit, as being a danger to society and a sin against God, it is only reasonable to suppose that their protest demands consideration, repentance, prayer, and self-devotion on the part of those who hear them, especially if these profess to follow Christ, who came to save His people from their sins by the sacrifice of Himself.

Now, it may be urged, with some show of plausibility, that the sin of intemperance is generally recognised, and that it is a waste of time to try to convince people of its evil results. But while no one would justify or excuse drunkenness for a single moment, there are many who thrust it out of their thoughts as an unpleasant subject, and many who fail to protest against that which causes it, if they do not actually encourage it. For our drinking habits, as a nation, are interwoven in the very web of our social life, and it is difficult to disentangle them. Literature has thrown a glamour of fascination around strong drink for centuries, till our ideas of hilarity and social enjoyment can hardly be dissociated from it, though that association is a relic of Bacchanalian revelry rather than a sign of Christian intelligence. Business men, too, know, far better than I do, how often treating and bargaining have been connected,

and how difficult it is even now for a commercial traveller to get successfully through certain rounds without the pouring out of libations before the wine-stained shrine of Bacchus. There is still room for improvement, also, in our social customs—a fact which I hope you will remember during all your festivities, especially resolving that no children shall ever be tempted by you to take what they certainly do not need and will not be benefited by, and which may arouse a latent appetite which you did not suspect, nor they either, though, once awakened, it may end in their ruin. Many a lad has gone out to a dinner party, where he is sensitive to the opinions of others, a little in doubt as to what is the proper thing to be done, resolving that he will follow the lead of his neighbour, and because it is the house of his employer, or of some one whose favour he is anxious not to lose, he will drink because others drink, abstainer though he has been up to that fatal day. It requires what is little short of heroism in certain circles not to do just as others do in circumstances like those, and the responsibility of kind-hearted hosts and hostesses who thus put temptation in the way of their visitors, and of those who wait on them, is tremendous. You say that there is no risk to some. Possibly that is true. It is not the cool, calculating, selfish people who are so likely to meet danger here, but those who are most susceptible, and therefore most lovable. The temptation assails most

fiercely those who are quickest to respond to evil and good, and thus by our social drinking habits we kill those we can spare the least and love the most.

I am among those who urge on their hearers from time to time the claims of total abstinence ; but this evening I shall speak almost exclusively of the evil of intemperance—which total abstinence is one means (and, as I think, the best means) of conquering.

Now, first among the woes arising from intemperance must be reckoned *the crimes of violence which are perpetrated under its influence*. When strong drink gets the mastery it is like a devil enthroned in the man, who blindly and ruthlessly does the devil's bidding. Conscience is dethroned ; the will is paralysed. He who once was a king in his self-rule is degraded into little else than a brute creature of impulse, who does not look to the results of his own actions. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has revealed cases of revolting ill-treatment which seem incredible in their barbarity, and they were almost all committed by those who were in drink ; and our police-courts are haunted by such cases, although probably not one in a hundred sees the light. That drunken mother who forced her little child to lie, screaming with terror, beside the dead body of the husband and father, is an example of facts so hideous that I could not bear to describe them, nor could you bear to listen to them. Over and over again criminals have acknowledged that

they have deliberately screwed themselves up to do some remorseless deed by drinking till conscience was dead. It was thus, you remember, with Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Abraham Lincoln. When he saw his victim in the box at the theatre his better feeling was stirred, and in order to nerve himself he rushed off to the nearest refreshment bar, and gulped down brandy till his better nature was revolutionized—may I not say demon-possessed? Then back he went, and shot down the noble President remorselessly. And, remember, it is not only special isolated acts of crime which are so inspired, but the nature which is ready to commit such acts is thus developed. Babes imbibe from their own mother's breast the love of drink, which afterwards ruins them; and often you may hear their feeble wailing answered by a muttered curse outside the door of the gin-palace. Children grow up amid scenes of drunken brutality, of which you have little conception; boys and girls herding together like beasts, or haunting the streets and hunted through them like stray dogs; and when the boys become thieves and the girls prostitutes, it does seem, humanly speaking, as if they were committed to do all these abominations. Yet these are the lambs for whom the Shepherd died!

Again, every thoughtful hearer in this assembly knows that *the pauperism of England is due to intemperance more than to anything else*. I am perfectly aware that there are other causes, but this far out-

weighs in influence every other, if not all others put together. The money spent by the wage-earning classes on intoxicating drinks—which, even if not harmful, are unnecessary—would save tens of thousands from becoming burdens on the ratepayers. I know men, and you know more men, who, if they worked all the week, as many here do, and were total abstainers, would be far better off than most tradesmen, clerks, and ministers. Yet they are living on the edge of pauperism, and helplessly roll over it at the first touch of serious illness or of business depression. The larger part of their wage is spent in drinking and standing drinks almost without intermission from Saturday till Monday night; and when, on Tuesday or Wednesday morning, they go back to work, they are often unnerved by their debauch. Such a man loses his skill—sinks lower and lower—is naturally the first sent adrift from a situation when work is slack, because of growing unreliability, becomes an idler and a vagabond, till at last (if he does not kill himself beforehand) he and his are paupers on the rates.

The Committee on Intemperance, appointed some years ago by the Lower House of Convocation, in the Province of Canterbury, whose invaluable statistics on this subject have never been surpassed, demonstrated that at least 75 per cent. of the occupants of our workhouses, and a large proportion of those receiving outdoor relief, became pensioners on the nation,

directly or indirectly, through drunkenness. In other words, out of every £4 you pay for poor-rates, £3 is required because of the effects of drink. And perhaps even worse is the breaking down of self-reliance and honourable independence, which constitute one of the greatest moral defences of the nation. In remote villages you still hear the proud and noble boast of small wage-earners—"I would rather starve than go on the parish"; but in our cities I fear that men of that class throw themselves on the public with fatal facility, especially when, through drink, they have lost their self-respect, their honour, and that righteousness which exalteth a nation.

Thirdly, must we not attribute much of *the moral degradation of multitudes to this same prolific curse*? There are evils which are not tabulated in the annals of crime or of pauperism. Virtuous, respectable society has little idea of the terrible degradation of multitudes, many of whom have sunk down into that seething cauldron of iniquity, from respectable positions, in almost every case through drink. The man made in the image of God has become a ferocious brute or a maudlin idiot; and the once modest girl, whose pleasant face was the cheer of the Sunday-school teacher and the delight of her home, is now that loud-voiced slattern whose blasphemy and impurity make you shudder as you pass by the entrance of the court she haunts. Thank God, there are many who are working bravely for these degraded sisters,



and who are seeking especially to save those of them who are not yet down in the deepest depths ; but you know how often these efforts are frustrated by the drink offered and accepted, which seems to give warmth and transient hilarity to those who, but for its influence and associations, would never have fallen at all. Will you not give up and fight against that which has caused the ruin of thousands, and made the sides of the horrible pit too slippery to be climbed ?

If I were addressing you merely as fellow-citizens of this great empire I would plead with you on the ground of its safety, because history proves by striking examples that a drunken nation becomes a wreck and ruin. The Assyrian Empire fell through the surfeiting and drunkenness of its people. Nineveh was conquered by a more sober nation, and its voluptuous monarch was slain in the midst of his feast. When the Persians, in their turn, became corrupted, they fell. The old lesson was repeated in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. In the early and better days of that great Commonwealth no one drank wine before he was thirty years of age ; but in its later and weaker period Mark Antony was notorious as the greatest drunkard of his age ; and of Tiberius, Seneca records that "he was only drunk once in his life, and that was from the moment he first became intoxicated to the day of his death." It was no wonder that the strong-handed Goths crumpled up the nerveless, emasculated empire with

resistless force and ruthless severity. God's voice in history is not silent about the fatal results of this sin.

And what of *the irreligion that saddens us who are believers in a God who shall give to every man according as his work shall be?* Is not the public-house the strongest antagonist of the Church, in villages and cities alike? On a Sunday night you would find more customers at the bar than worshippers in the sanctuary; and it is there that religion is sneered at, it is there that conscience is drugged, it is there that passion is roused, it is there that hopes are blasted, and it is there that souls are lost. You ask sometimes what becomes of your Sunday-school scholars. If you could trace them, you would sadly often see them vanish through the swing-door of a gin-palace; finding it to be the wide gate leading to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Some years ago, in Manchester, Mr. Bardsley made this startling statement: "A superintendent of a Sunday-school, some time since, took down the names of one hundred children who within a few years had been in his Sunday-school, and he endeavoured to ascertain the history of every one of that hundred. Of course, he could not trace some of them; but of the seventy-seven whom he traced, how many were attending church regularly? Two only, and thirty-nine were confirmed drunkards." And yet you think that temperance people are too hard on the drink traffic!

*And what of our religious influence over heathen peoples?* Is it not more than counterbalanced by the drink we take with us? Indeed, if the two influences were fairly compared, I am inclined to think that, nominally Christian though we are, our power has been more of a curse than of a blessing to subject races. When Baboo Chunder Sen was over here, he said, in St. James's Hall: "You now see scores and hundreds of young, intelligent, educated natives of India falling away and dying victims to intemperance. . . . The whole atmosphere of India seems to be rending with the cries of thousands of poor, helpless widows, who—may I say it?—oftentimes go the length of cursing the British Government for having introduced this very thing." And there are Mohammedans who, if they see a man reeling along intoxicated, exclaim, "He has left Mohammed and gone over to Jesus." Such scandal have we brought on His sacred name! And while we are making costly efforts to put down the slave trade off the coast of Africa, we are degrading, enslaving, and killing by strong drink more people in that Dark Continent than all our ships of war will save from Arab traders.

Now, I have spoken to you chiefly of the outward signs of this curse, but there are *far more that are HIDDEN*. You may tabulate the amount of money worse than wasted, but you cannot estimate or imagine the sum total of misery which hides in the

homes of the rich as well as of the poor. You may hear the squabble between boon companions at the bar as to who shall pay the score, but you do not hear the sighs and sobs of the wife who, on the few shillings flung to her out of good wages, can hardly keep the children in rags or feed them with crusts ; you do not see her when she listens with palpitating heart for the shuffling footsteps of her besotted husband, or when the scared children are hastily hidden away in hope that they may escape father's foul words and cruel blows. She does not proclaim all this on the housetop, for once she loved him, and still she is loyal—perhaps will be till she dies, or, far worse, till she herself takes to drink in order to forget her misery. This curse falls on other homes than those of poverty. Fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters—these know the dreadful family secret, which they hide as long as they can from the uncharitable world. Indeed, they hardly dare whisper in an agony of secret prayer, “O God ! he drinks !” “She drinks !” There are tender hearts stabbed with hidden wounds which bleed in silence. Many a brave woman suffers quietly, like the wounded dove which claps her white wings to her side, hiding the wound from which she is bleeding to death. God only knows the widespread ruin being wrought around us to-day, the domestic tragedies of which no whisper is heard in public. You may have seen a fragment of wreck

on the shore—the broken mast, the twisted iron—and though you pass it by chatting thoughtlessly, if it could speak it would tell of men gone down in the deep sea, who died, and left no sign.

What demon is this which is doing such dire work—crowding our prisons, driving into our poorhouses, peopling our asylums, blasting our prosperity, dishonouring the Church, cursing our homes, paralysing our work for Christ at home and abroad? It is this terrible drink which you take and proffer to others without much thought, but about which the late Sir Andrew Clark (no mean authority) said, “When I consider the terrible effects of the abuse of alcohol, I am disposed to give up my profession, to give up everything, and to go forth on a holy crusade preaching to all men to beware of the enemy of the race.” Even if you come short of that, at least resolve that in your class, in your mission, in your home, at your club, in your offices and warehouses, and through any literature you can influence, you will do something, with God’s help, to bring to an end this demon-reign and enthrone Christ as King!

It has been my main purpose this evening to give you a glimpse of this evil, for adequately to represent it would require half a week rather than half an hour. Of course I shall not attempt to point out all THE DIRECTIONS IN WHICH CHRISTIAN EFFORT MAY GO FORTH to meet and conquer this gigantic

evil ; but I must say a word or two to show that their variety is so great that no one of you can excuse yourself for doing nothing.

1. You say that you are not a total abstainer, and do not mean to be. May you never have cause either in your own history or in the future of your children to repent of this decision ! At least, be sure you do not form it without thought and prayer, for its issues to yourself and others may be momentous. But we can all foster a public opinion which shall make restrictions on drink-getting far more stringent than they are. The closing of refreshment-bars and public-houses on Sunday, the further limitation of hours during which drink can be sold ; a great diminution in the number of licenses, and the severance between music-halls and drink ; the employment of men, as in America, in the place of barmaids ; the transfer of control from magistrates to ratepayers—would do something to lessen the temptations which now assail the weak on every side.

2. Besides this we can provide counter attractions. In some places we might utilise our church buildings for such purposes. In villages, especially, where other buildings are not to be had, I would have the schoolrooms and vestries, at least, used as club-rooms and reading-rooms during the week, where non-alcoholic drinks could be had, and employers might more generally make a similar provision for those in their employ, as some firms already are doing.

3. Then in our social habits we may push still further the improvement over which already we rejoice, until no one shall say of any of us, "I was taught to drink by what you offered me," or, "My old craving was revived when you asked me to join in drinking that toast." And from children's hands keep all intoxicants, unless you would risk the souls of those you love the best.

4. Total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks as beverages I do not attempt to justify, for it has justified itself, as every intelligent person knows perfectly well. Nor must I attempt now to enforce it upon you by arguments which grow in force with me in proportion to my widening observation and growing experience of life. On that subject I content myself with saying this. If you have any love for stimulants, and are getting to depend upon them for comfort or cheerfulness—still more if you have ever been the worse for them—I assure you that your only safety is to be found in total abstinence. Begin suddenly and begin now. About the taste for drink, if about anything, the words of our Lord are true, "This kind goeth not out save by prayer and fasting." Fasting is the abstinence from what you like, and prayer is the power without which you will fail to give it up.

And are none of you, who declare that for yourselves there is no risk whatever, chivalrous enough to say "Well, I will stand by my weaker brethren in

this ; they shall not be alone ; they shall not feel that they have not my sympathy and concurrence ; they shall not be marked out and pointed at as if a total abstainer meant a former or a probable drunkard. No ! If drink is doing this deadly work, if it even threatens such dire results, I will do without it" ? I like that story of David's magnanimity when he was weary and parched, and two heroes in his army risked their lives to get him a drink of water from the dear old well of Bethlehem. He looked at it for a moment with the longing which only a thirsty man can understand, and then he deliberately poured it all out to the last drop on the ground. Why ? Because he would not refresh himself at the cost of another. You professing Christians have an infinitely higher example than that in Christ Jesus, whom you call Lord and Saviour. He gave up heaven, He gave up life itself, to redeem you from the power of sin ; and it is at the foot of His cross that we shall find inspiration to fight against the sins of our age, as He fought against the sins of His age, even to the death.



THE USE AND ABUSE OF MONEY

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”—*Matt.* vi. 24.

## V

### THE USE AND ABUSE OF MONEY

WE all know that the opinion of many foreigners about us Englishmen is that we are pre-eminently a money-getting and a money-loving race, and that to ensure our commercial prosperity we would willingly sacrifice our national honour, and our Christian principles. I do not believe this to be true. Although in our dealings with other races there is much we are ashamed of, yet when the national heart has been stirred, our love of justice and honour, and our willingness to count mere money as the small dust in the balance as weighed against these have often been revealed. At the same time we must admit that, as a commercial and wealthy people, the gaining of money and the use of it are peculiarly likely to expose us to temptation, against which we must be constantly on our guard. Phrases are constantly met with in conversation and in reading which indicate how largely the golden image looms in the imagination of average Englishmen. "The sacred rights of property," for

example, is a sentence to conjure with ; though there are other rights far more "sacred" than they—*e.g.*, the right of honest workers to fair pay, whatever the competition ; the right of the poor to homes where there can at least be a chance of decency and of health ; the right of cottagers to live within reach of their work ; and the right of Nonconformists to have place and opportunity for Christian worship. "Property," in one sense, is a misnomer ; for the richest man in the world has nothing which is "proper" to him alone, since all that he has he holds as a responsible steward for God and for his fellows. Then we hear sometimes that "Providence is smiling" on a man—as if all God's smiles were golden smiles ; as if making money fast was a better thing than living in the favour of God in the lowliest sphere, where the most menial work is bravely done. Or we are told that "So-and-so is doing well"—as if all morality were summed up in money-making ; or we are asked about some one, "How much is he worth?"—as if he was to be weighed by his gold, and not by his capacity and willingness to serve his own generation according to the will of God. Of course, when we use these phrases we do not mean all that they imply, but they are amongst the common and almost proverbial expressions which, like fluffy seeds floating in the air, show which way the wind of public opinion blows. The image of gold is still worshipped, and too often self-respect, personal prayer, family claims, Christian

service, sons and daughters, a good conscience towards God and towards men, are laid upon Mammon's altar, though loud and clear the voice cries from heaven, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols!"

I.—THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE UPON THE USE AND ABUSE OF MONEY deserves more consideration than it sometimes receives. This concerns us a good deal more than theological hair-splitting, and concerns us all, for not what we possess (whether little or much), but the spirit in which we gain it, or lose it, or try for it, or use it when it is ours, is what God's Word deals with.

Wealth is spoken of in the Bible very often as a *good thing*, and is sometimes even promised as a recompense to God's people. Abraham, for example, who is distinctively called "the friend of God," was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. It was in the first of these that wealth consisted chiefly in those days, and an embodiment of that fact is found in our common word, "pecuniary," which suggests by its origin (*pecus*, sheep or other cattle) the old days of simple pastoral life, when flocks and herds were the means of barter. Jacob too is represented as a shrewd, clever man of business, who set out with his staff only to win his fortune, much as many a young Scot has come up to this metropolis to make his way in the world. He had prosperity, and he

thanked God for it. But in him there was craft and greed, which reappeared in one generation after another of the race descended from him ; and hence it was that the acquisition of *personal* wealth was fenced in by so many restrictions in the Mosaic law, and a large proportionate giving—even to the fourth or fifth of the whole income—was enforced upon every man who belonged to that nation. The reasonableness of the Jewish law of usury is only seen by those who know the social habits of those times, and the national tendency. To you it seems right enough to lend money on interest. It is a legitimate use of capital, and money so employed advances the welfare of society, sets enterprises going, and binds together those who thus contract mutual obligations. But think of the way in which that custom has been exercised in almost all Eastern countries, among the cultivators of India, and the miserable fellaheen in Egypt, and you will see what the God of justice and mercy intended to prevent. And, as a matter of fact, in spite of those Mosaic prohibitions, and in spite of such ordinances as the year of Jubilee, when all mortgaged lands reverted to their owners, there existed an awful amount of exaction and oppression, which called forth denunciations from inspired prophets which were terrific in their fierceness. There are passages in Jeremiah, Micah, and Zechariah, and in certain of the Psalms, which indicate that in the days of the

writers corruption and oppression were as much national vices as drunkenness and impurity are in England. It was because money was unrighteously gained, badly spent, and wickedly worshipped, that Mammon (typical wealth and the typical rich) became the object of Divine denunciations.

We must not forget that this was continued in the time of our Lord ; that corruption had not often been worse than when He came — appearing as it did both among the Publicans, who sold themselves to the heathen oppressor, and among the Pharisees, who devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers. Therefore, He who came not only to carry on the work of the prophets, but to give higher meaning and diviner sanction to it, spoke some of His strongest words against this vice. For the most part these utterances have no recorded modification on the score of extravagant love of money, or its abuse. They stand forth in their naked simplicity and sternness : "Woe unto you rich, for ye have received your consolation"; and this was terribly set forth in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. It seems incredible that such woe should come upon a rich man, merely because he neglected a poor beggar at his gate ; and if that were all, we might wonder at such words from the lips of our gracious Lord. But His hearers could fill in the picture. Out of a too familiar experience they could supply the positive sins of the rich man ;

the cruel covetousness, the grinding tyranny which would squeeze the life-blood from the poor, if only that would make him richer—and it was in reference to such as these that James fiercely exclaims: “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that will come upon you.”

Our Lord in His teaching throws a flood of light upon this subject. He speaks of men as “stewards” of the unseen King, who are to use their money and all other powers as those accountable to Him; implying that money is no more absolutely theirs than your capital is your agent’s, when you put it under his control that he may use it for you. He shows that the right employment of money (be it little or much) may make us the more ready to hold in trust the true riches, and that it is possible so to employ it as to help and comfort others, who at last will welcome their wise benefactor into everlasting habitations, where he will use in the service of the same King those riches which will never perish. And He points out the danger in such stewardship—namely, that instead of using money for God, we should love it for its own sake; and instead of making it a slave, we should bow ourselves before it as our master, and even as our god. Then, lest any should suppose that such conduct would still be compatible with the service of God, He says, “No man can serve *two* masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and



despise the other." That double alternative is not a vain repetition. God, the real Master, cannot be "despised"; but He may be "hated" by one who worships Mammon; but, on the other hand, if a man hold to God, he will "despise" the other master as unworthy of being loved and served. If money is the loftiest good in life to us, God is dethroned, and we are guilty of worshipping an idol, who has been thus described,—

"God of the world, and worldlings,  
Great Mammon—greatest God below the sky."

II.—NOW, AFTER THIS GLANCE AT THE ATTITUDE OF GOD'S WORD TOWARDS MONEY, LET US SEE IN WHAT SENSE MAMMON (which is merely money personified) IS KING, AND WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF HIS RULE.

There is a certain amount of time and energy which you are compelled to spend in pursuits which bring you gain; pursuits which you reverently and rightly recognise as God's appointment for you. When you go into business to-morrow, from the time you enter it till the hour when you return jaded to your home, you will hardly have five minutes for thought about anything beyond, and it will be as much as you can do to keep an even temper, a clear conscience, and a cheerful heart amidst your worries and anxieties. And the issue of that is money; perhaps a bare sufficiency for the support of your home;

perhaps a larger income with an increase of responsibility. Sometimes you ask yourself, "Is this serving Mammon?" and you ask it the more anxiously because you know how insidious the sin is, and how through unexpected avenues it makes its way into the heart and honeycombs it. Its work is something like that of the termites when they attack a piece of furniture. Burrowing into it they hide themselves, and secretly work and scoop till the interior is gone and the exterior is but a thin shell; then suddenly with a touch it crumbles into dust. Earnestly you pray that your Christian character may never come to such an end as that. But whatever the peril you cannot avoid working for money. Even if you are in business for yourself, and are willing to sacrifice a portion of income so as to give more time to mental culture, to home claims, and to Church work, you cannot do it, because if you give up this you must lose that; and others are so eagerly on the look-out for any chance you let slip that your choice seems to lie between more than you need and poverty. Those who are ill or poor do not need God's grace more than you do—if you would live in the world without being of it; but happily "He is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."

Let us look for a few tests, which may indicate to us when we are serving Mammon in the sense which Christ forbade—a few signs in character which

may be warnings of impending danger. These may be to us like the electric sponge you pass along a nerve till suddenly a twinge of pain says "the mischief is there."

1. *We must be on our guard against such absorption in business as will destroy relish for what is spiritual.* It is bad enough to have our thoughts so occupied as to lose all interest in other spheres of life outside those of our profession or trade, as did the man over whom the caustic epitaph was written, "He sold hats for forty years, and then died." It is worse still to get so absorbed as to regard the love of children as a weariness, and the sympathy of wife and friends as an impertinent intrusion to be coldly repudiated. But it is worst of all to let thoughts of money-getting or of money-spending come creeping into the secret place of prayer, dragging down heavenly aspirations and paralysing love to God, until old enthusiasms are dead and the man whom some envy is, in the angel's sight, "without God and without hope in the world."

"Let others seek earth's honours—be it mine  
One law to cherish, and to track one line,  
Straight on towards heaven to press with single bent,  
To know and love my God—and then to die content."

2. *Again, we may suspect ourselves of inclining to Mammon worship if there be no grateful acknowledgment of God's hand in the results of our toil.* Perhaps some loss comes unexpectedly, through the closing of a foreign market, or through depression of securities

by the iniquitous "bearing" of the market, or through the injustice and ingratitude of a firm, who availed themselves of your energies to work up a business, and then put a lad in your place because he would be satisfied with a smaller salary. As a Christian man you will not be content to curse your ill-luck or your want of foresight, or to blame the employer who was the immediate cause of the change, but you will recognise God's hand in it, and in earnest prayer will say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass; and He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day." Or, if success and a prosperity which once you did not dream of are yours—the way opening up unexpectedly to fortune, as it sometimes does to those who work and wait—if you are a mammon worshipper you will offer no thanks to God for it, and no gift to His cause as your acknowledgment that all is of Him and for Him; but you will "burn incense to your own drag, and sacrifice to your own net," and say, "By my power and the might of my hand I have done all this."

3. *A third symptom of Mammon service is a growing carelessness about the wants of others.* When a man whom God has prospered really feels less for the poor and helpless than he used to do; when he does no more for them (and perhaps even less)

than he did in his struggling days ; when he has in no way increased his gifts to God's cause at home and abroad—he may fairly suspect that all is not well with him ; that he is not growing in likeness to Him who, though “He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich.” “I have seen a sore evil under the sun : riches kept to the hurt of the owners thereof.”

Nor is it simply in the *use* of money, but in the *acquisition* of it that this disregard for others is seen. Nothing is more distressing than to hear occasionally that some leading philanthropists are notorious for their close-fisted dealings with their own employees, making no allowance for temporary illness, and recognising no claim in long and faithful service. The cruelty which will keep young shop-girls standing for long weary hours, never allowing them to sit for a moment even in the slackest times, except for a hasty meal, lest thoughtless customers should be displeased at a supposed want of promptitude, is an iniquity perpetrated in the service of Mammon, as opposed to the service of Christ. The carelessness which will sometimes turn them into the streets at night, and take no thought or care of the moral tone in an establishment—if only the departments are made to pay—entails a heavy responsibility in the judgment of Him from whom no secret thing is hid.

4. *Another sign that the service of Mammon is*

*superseding the service of God is seen when there is a lowering of the old standard of Christian character with which life was begun.* If now without a blush of shame, or without a twinge of conscience, you can do what is contrary to righteousness and love, you are in sore peril. Great as may be your success, it will only prove in the end to be like the belt of gold a digger fastened round his waist, when he tried to swim in from the wreck, which dragged him down to his death.

I am sure that the fortunes amassed by some appear very different, in the judgment of God, from our estimate of them. They stand before us like the Pyramids, wonderful monuments of skill and strength ; but God looks *within*, and He sees that in the heart of them lies buried the dust of kings. May God forbid that any of you should kill and bury all real kingliness in the outward achievements of life : for this is the final result of the service of Mammon. Between it and the service of God there is opposition, and must be choice, for you cannot serve God and mammon.

III.—I have suggested for your thought three or four indications of Mammon worship ; but now let us turn from it as A GOD, AND LOOK AT IT AS A SERVANT. As a ruler it is always condemned in the Old Testament and in the New, but as a servant it is always commended.

1. *In the right ACQUISITION of money*, immense good may be gained, and given. Business gives discipline to character; it affords opportunities for self-control and patience; it develops diligence and courage, foresight and wisdom, so that the common work of life if it be well done is a noble preparation for heaven. And only God knows the vast amount of good which is done for the struggling and needy, by men of business in their own sphere, which lies for the most part outside the cognisance of the Christian Church. Rising up before one's imagination I see the clean-handed, fair-dealing tradesman; the employer of labour who is just in his demands and considerate in his kindness; the merchant whose name is a synonym for probity; the lawyer who checks many an injustice, counsels freely and wisely some who are oppressed and wronged, and refuses to touch a case which is unjust; the medical man who day after day does a ministry of mercy, often where no fee can be expected. Such men as these may be making large fortunes, but while making them they are the servants of God, and are using mammon for Him. "They hold to the one, and they despise the other."

2. *But may not good service be done in the EMPLOYMENT of money also, be it little or much?* The Bible is full of reminders of the beneficence of God, whose children we profess to be. It declares that He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living

thing ; that the earth is full of His riches : but, instead of keeping what is beautiful to Himself, He lavishly bestows it on a fallen world, so that even the solitary wood, the virgin mountain, the unnoticed hedgerow, the unvisited nooks and crannies of the world, are simply crowded with proofs of His munificence. And when we turn to the New Testament we read of His priceless gift—the gift of His dear Son for our redemption ; and as he contemplates that, Paul breaks out into the cry, “ Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and love of God.” For our comfort, and for our inspiration to seek after like-mindedness with God, we are often reminded in Scripture of His unmerited love to us. There may be in us the combination of wealth and Christianity. I have often been struck by one of your city sights, with which your eyes are more familiar than mine. At one end of our busiest thoroughfare stands the Royal Exchange, with its inscription, “ The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof,” and at the other stands St. Paul’s, with its golden cross gleaming high above the noise and turmoil. Between these there is the great crowded street, a type of vast wealth, of growing enterprise, and of splendid possibilities ; but if only in and above all these we really acknowledge God as the source of material prosperity and of the world’s salvation proclaimed by the cross of His dear Son, what a tremendous moral power will be ours as English Christians ! From the change in men’s



hearts would come change in the employment of their powers, so that in a few short years pauperism would be annihilated, heathenism would be startled into belief that the Christian faith was a living power, and our commercial prosperity acquiring new sacredness would no longer be an idol opposing God, but would be God's mighty weapon to advance throughout the world the kingdom of His Son, into which all the kings of the earth will bring their glory and honour. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and glory and honour and blessing." Amen.



## FRETFULNESS

B.L.

G

“Fret not thyself because of evildoers. . . . Fret not thyself  
because of him that prospereth in his way. . . . Fret not thyself  
in any wise to do evil.”—*Ps.* xxxvii. pt. 1, 7, 8.

## VI

### FRETFULNESS

MANY of us know that it is very difficult to obey this exhortation, and few things are more apt to fret us than seeing others prosper who do not deserve success. Boys and girls at school, for example, may know that a competitor has distanced them, not by fair work or greater talent, but by dishonesty in class or in the examination-room, and their familiar adage does not seem to be fulfilled—"Cheats never prosper." This is but a rehearsal at school of a frequent experience in the world. One man in the office may do all the work, while another gets all the credit of it, who is never generous enough or just enough to give the least hint that praise is due to the subordinate. In another place, one who is known by all his fellow-clerks to be idle and worthless manages by his plausible manners and base sycophancy to get on the right side of those in authority; with this result—that when a vacancy occurs he is promoted over the heads of those who deserve advance far more than he. Much the same thing is seen in every profession and business. The unscrupulous lawyer will make a fortune, while the honest man

eats his heart out waiting for clients who seldom come. The bold advertiser, who disregards the truth, reaps a harvest from a credulous public, while conscientious scruples prevent another from taking the tide at its flood, and he thereby misses a fortune. These are among the common incidents of life.

Probably they are more common now than formerly, because in the smaller communities, and with the more permanent residence of earlier days, more was known of personal character than is possible to us. In London a man comes into a district for a short time, and may leave it before his evil ways are discovered. If he is a suburban resident his business is often at a distance from his home and his nearest neighbours know nothing about it. Besides, companies and institutions are common now, and they do what no one of their directors personally would like to do: for in the subdivision of responsibility conscientiousness is reduced to a minimum. If you judge purely from a worldly standpoint you may well doubt the truth of our grandfathers' maxim—which was correct enough in times and places where each man was known by his neighbours—"Honesty is the best policy." Hence there is more reason than in David's days for seeking grace to obey the exhortation in our text, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity."

This psalm is beautiful, as it is familiar. We accept the title as it stands—"A Psalm of David"—

for, however it may have been edited, there is strong internal evidence that in germ it came from the sweet singer of Israel. Certainly no one had more reason than the Psalmist to write as he does here.

It is one of the alphabetical psalms, as they are called, of which the twenty-fifth is the first example in the Psalter. They are thus designated because the same idea is repeated in various forms, each being introduced by a sentence beginning with a Hebrew letter ; though the letters are not always in their exact order, nor are they here. It was a form of Hebrew poetry, something like the acrostic, of which our forefathers were fond, and it may have been the more popular as being easier to remember by a people who read less than they listened or learned. It was well that such truths as are here should be kept in memory both by young and old. Hence they are repeated in the book of Proverbs, portions of which are moulded on the same literary form. We still want every encouragement to the quietude of mind here inculcated, for constant provocations in the lives of most of us threaten to destroy it. Happily we have not only exhortation, but example. The spirit we ought to cultivate is exemplified with more or less approach to perfection in the lives of men whose inward struggles are revealed to us in Scripture. The whole book of Job is a portrayal of a human soul struggling, in the twilight of Divine revelation, after the possession of an equable

poise amid the world's unquietness. David himself, especially in his earlier years, enjoyed the inward calm which he here commends. But most clearly of all we see this temper exhibited and commended in Jesus Christ, the one perfect man, who had within Him a peace which was His own, spite of the devil's assault and the world's hate—

“O who like Thee, so calm, so bright,  
 Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Light of light !  
 O who like Thee did ever go  
 So patient through a world of woe !  
 O who like Thee so humbly bore  
 The scorn, the scoffs, of men before ;  
 So meek, so lowly, yet so high,  
 So glorious in humility !”

May the same mind be in us that was also in Christ Jesus ! then we shall obey the exhortation, “Fret not thyself because of evildoers.”

I.—*First let us clearly understand what the sin is against which we are here warned.* When the Psalmist tells us not to “fret” ourselves because of evildoers, he certainly does not mean to encourage a spirit of indifference to the prevalence of evil. That would be utterly contrary to the whole spirit of this Divine revelation. The struggle of right against wrong, of God against our enemy, is the burden of the history of Israel, and the essential meaning of the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son of God. Indeed, you need not look further than the Psalms



to find the strongest expressions of determination to fight against evil in all forms. Such as this in the 75th Psalm, for example: "The horns of the wicked will I cut off." Quotations of such passages might be multiplied indefinitely. Turn to the prophecies, and you find that they largely consist of scathing denunciations of popular sins. Study the words of our Lord, and, amid all His pitifulness for penitent sinners, you hear stern condemnation of the vices and godlessness which prevailed in His day; indeed, His death on Calvary was God's unmistakable condemnation of sin, though at the same time it provided for its pardon. Neither in our text nor elsewhere in the Bible will you discover any excuse for the policy of *laissez-faire*, which is popular with some who would leave vice at home and heathenism abroad unrebuked and unwarned.

The Hebrew word translated "fret" only occurs here and in Prov. xxxiv. 19, where we read, "Fret not thyself because of evil men." Cheyne renders it in our text, "Be not incensed against wicked men." The warning is not directed against righteous anger, but against a discontented and bitter spirit, causing hatred to men and revolt against God. It is much the temper into which Asaph confesses that he fell when in the 73rd Psalm he says, "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." The root of the sin lies in discontent with what God has ordained, or in disbelief that

anything is ordained, in the feeling that things are not controlled by a God who has regard for right and for mercy. This feeling is natural enough if our judgment is based on what is visible here, or if we decide upon the right or wrong of God's methods, by estimating the results which flow from them in a man's circumstances, without regard to the results on his character, eternal though these are.

The truth is that it is always unfair and misleading to judge of work before it is finished, and on the visible platform of human life God's work is not complete. When I was in Athens some years ago I was struck, not only with the exquisite beauty of the architecture and sculpture, but also with the soft golden colour of the marble, toned as it has been by the sunshine and the showers of over 2,400 years. I availed myself of an opportunity for climbing Pentelicus, not only that I might see the Bay of Marathon when the sun rose, but also that I might visit the great quarries from which all the marble had been taken. Now imagine one great block of marble standing there in its lonely grandeur for centuries, undisturbed and unthreatened, suddenly being attacked by the Athenian workmen employed by Pericles. By many a blow, and by many a desperate pull, they would at last detach it, and it would be rolled down to lower levels far from the serene heights of its quiet rest. Humbled and broken, ready to become anything, it would be sawn and chipped

carried away over rough roads to the city, and there, by hammer and chisel, would have to submit itself to the sculptor's hands. Rest would be exchanged for turmoil, freedom for submission ; but what of the result ? Instead of the loneliness of death on the mountain-top, it would be for ages to come the presentation of life in its most beautiful form. Thus the block of Pentelicus became the ornament of the Parthenon. Think you not that if man may do thus with dead matter, God can and will shape each of us aright ? Will He not, by trials, temptations, and vexations, transform Christian character into the image of His Son ? And at last, as the perfect work of Phidias was raised on high, so the perfected man who waits and trusts will be manifested in glory. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, and He shall exalt you in due time." It is in the waiting period, when we do not see what God is making of us, that we are tempted to restlessness and discontent, and to envy of those who seem not in trouble as we often are. It is to those thus tempted that our text is addressed.

I suppose all will admit that the fretfulness here alluded to has sad, and sometimes disastrous, effects on our own happiness and usefulness. If we begin our day's work in a bad temper, we fail to do it well. All that we attempt is marred, and the annoyance of seeing this, or of being rebuked by others who see it, only adds fuel to the flame, till we are worried and

angry beyond our wont. Others around us are affected, too, for ill-temper is contagious as fever, and the peace of a home, or the pleasantness of an office, disappears. God's good angel vanishes at the approach of what he hates. Hence many a home is simply miserable through unrest; and, instead of being longed for as a harbour of refuge from the world's storms, it is avoided by those who go for change and pleasure to the club, or to the public-house, or to the street, where dire dangers lurk. There are professing Christians who are largely responsible for young people who have gone wrong, because it was their fretfulness and irritability which first drove them into the way of temptation. And as to witness-bearing for Christ, it is simply paralysed, for how can one who is indulging a fretful spirit represent Him who was meek and lowly in heart, and gave rest to men's souls?

Do let us beware of this spirit of fretfulness, whether provoked by the prosperity of the wicked or by their vexatiousness, for, like other weeds of the soul, this grows apace, and before we know it may check and choke the growth of the good seed of the kingdom. Even though things seem for a time to be against you for evil, though others pass you by in life's race who do not deserve the prize you strive in vain to win, still listen to the wise words of Paul, who was more sensitive than you, and had far more to make him worried and anxious: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with

thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus."

II.—*It may be for our further enlightenment to think of some provocations to the temper here reproved.* We do not find better examples of them than in the life of the Psalmist himself, who knew from personal experience what he was writing about. If Spurgeon was right when he said, "Stormy weather may curdle even the cream of humanity," David had causes enough for the souring of his temper and the disturbance of his serenity. Yet, on the whole, by God's grace, he enjoyed much inward calm. He may have specially referred to Saul here, who, from jealousy and suspicion, hunted him without provocation. The contrast between what a man should be and should not be, as suggested in this Psalm, appeared in David and his great antagonist. Saul stands out on the page of history, gaunt, brooding, suspicious, with fits of savagery, alternating with outbursts of impulsive generosity ; at one time praising David, at another, hurling his javelin at him, resolved to kill him. On the other hand, David appears in his earlier manhood, bright, sunny, songful, loyal to the king who tried to ruin him, bravely doing his work, though he knew he would get no credit for it, and with a buoyant faith in God which did not fail in all the dangers of his exile, and broke out in songs of

praise which inspire the Church still. During all those years in which Saul was seeking to slay him, David showed the possibility by God's grace of obeying the words, "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." Indeed, in Saul's loneliness and moodiness he saw a perpetual warning against giving way to envy and hatred, a beacon light revealing the rocks on which that darkened soul made shipwreck at last.

I think that one of the most remarkable characteristics of David was his calmness in waiting for God's time to ascend the throne promised to him. He never tried to win popularity or to arouse disloyalty in Saul's followers, but in quiet confidence bided his time in the spirit of the words, "He that believeth shall not make haste." All that happened to him he accepted with wonderful equanimity, and made no effort to alter his lot. If he was commanded by the king to go on a perilous enterprise, he went without a murmur or a remonstrance. If Saul in his ruthless anger flung at him his heavy javelin, he did not retaliate, but quietly stepped aside and let the weapon whizz past him. When his life was in absolute danger he went home, though he knew he was dogged by assassins; and when the king, in an outburst of good will, was ready to be reconciled, David instantly responded. If he was prosperous, it was not because he used any doubtful expedients to curry favour either with the Court or with the people; and when

he was driven into caves and forests in peril of his life he still sang of the goodness of his God. All through that period of his life you may look in vain for fretfulness and discontent, and in his calm serenity he showed that it was possible not to "fret" because of evildoers.

You see much the same characteristic in him at an earlier period. Who can forget his serene confidence of victory when he went up, almost unarmed, to confront the giant of Gath? It was in evident allusion to that event he wrote the 27th Psalm, where he quotes almost the exact words of the vaunting hero in the verse, "When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell": graphic words in which you almost hear the giant's stumbling step, followed by the crash of his fall. Time would fail to tell of incidents in David's career which illustrate the meaning of our text. If not, it would be interesting to trace in each some typical instance of the temptation which comes to us. Thus, as Saul assailed him through suspicion, so your lot may be made miserable by those who do not trust you, although, so far as you know, you have never done anything to forfeit their confidence; and in that time of trial you may remember him who would not suffer himself to be fretted by the troubles which resulted from the plots of his brooding enemy. Or think of Doeg, the Amalekite, and his cruel cowardice in telling Saul

what he had seen of David, the fugitive, so that the poor priests who ignorantly befriended him were cruelly murdered. And let this help you when slander is busy, and whispers are heard against you which you cannot trace, yet cannot ignore; and then, when, in spite of a good conscience, you are wronged like David, "fret not thyself," but trust that God will keep and defend you. Or recall the story of Absalom, and let it cheer you when one who ought to have been loyal turns against you, and your heart is almost broken with grief. Then hearken to the words of the man who endured that bitterness, and obey his exhortation in this Psalm: "Trust in the Lord and do good. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass; and He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day."

III.—*Finally, let us see how the temper of soul here rebuked may be cured.* David evidently comforted himself partly by the thought that prosperity gained by wickedness was only transient, and not worth having, as many supposed it was. The shepherd lad had gone through varied experiences since those old happy days in Bethlehem. He had lived at Court, and had been popular there, but now its glamour was gone, and he had learned that fame was hollow, and that titles and honours brought more care than comfort. He had tried to soothe the moody king to rest with the sweet strains of his voice and harp, and



must often have had the feeling expressed by one of our poets, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." But though the illusions of his boyhood faded, the God who had been his good Shepherd became more to him as a fugitive in the forest, when he often sang in a gloomy cavern, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." No doubt he knew less of the unseen world than we know, for we have listened to Him who brought life and immortality to light through His Gospel ; but though his horizon was narrower, he too learned the truth, as all do who are really taught of God. His own earthly prosperity came in God's good time, as he knew even in his days of vexation it would come. And that prosperity, with its unsatisfying nature, led him on to what was higher still for he found, not in it, but in his manly piety and filial trust, the pledge of the coming honour which belongs to those who are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. Experience taught David that the prosperity of the wicked was gained at too great a cost, for whether it passes away here, as he expected, or is swept away at death, it is too transient to be purchased at the cost of debased character and ruined hope. It is said that when two gentlemen were driving through a magnificent estate, one asked the other, "What is the value of this estate?" "I don't know what it is valued at; I know what it cost its late possessor," was the reply. "How much was that?" "It cost his soul," was the solemn

answer; and it was terribly true. The millionaire had first come to the city poor, the son of a godly man who had been able to leave him only the heritage of a good name. But he prospered by setting aside higher duties and conscientious scruples that he might make money, and he made it. He gained what he lived for, but on his death-bed he whispered to his attendant, "My prosperity has been my ruin." God save us all from that: "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice."

Meantime let us trust God as one who will do the right thing for each of us. An old writer has truly said, "Faith cures fretting." The simple belief that if we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all else that is necessary will be added to us will prove (and with some of us has proved) a sovereign remedy against fret and fear. There is a beautiful little story told of Luther at a time when the world seemed against him. He was looking out of his window one summer evening, and noticed a bird making his easy dispositions for his night's rest. "Look," said he, "at that little fellow. How he preaches faith to us all! He takes hold of his twig, tucks his head under his wing, and goes to sleep, leaving God to think for him." Dear brethren, tried and harassed as I know you are, do pray for grace that you may "leave God to think for you," and He will do more for you, and make more of you, than now seems to be possible.

PEACE WITHIN AND WITHOUT

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”—*Rom.* xii. 18.

## VII

### PEACE WITHIN AND WITHOUT

**I**N the teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles stress is often laid upon the inward peace enjoyed by the children of God, which arises from a sense of reconciliation with Him. That peace is at once fundamental and eternal ; for it lies between us and the Father of our spirits, and will find its consummation in His immediate presence, when the noise of this world will no longer fill our ears, and its distracting pageants will have passed away. Happy is he who enjoys the peace of God which passeth all understanding, won for us, and placed within the reach of every one of us, by the coming to the world of Jesus Christ. He was the embodiment of this peace, though none lived a more troubled life than He, and no legacy could have seemed more precious to His disciples than that which He assigned to them in His parting words—"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth give I unto

you." He then implanted within their souls the germ from which universal peace was ultimately to grow, till the angels' song, which at His birth foretold "peace on earth," would be fulfilled in the deepest and broadest sense.

But all Divine blessings have their earthward, as well as their heavenly, side. No one of them is like the moon, which always presents the same face towards us; but is like the earth, which presents to the sun every face in turn. The whole of life, not this or that part of it, is to be ruled by serenity. If we enjoy inward peace with God, there is no department of our life in which it is not to assert its supremacy. It should appear in the home, the church, and the business. In short, Divine peace, like Divine love, is to be full-orbed. Men are to see it as well as God, for while we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, we are also to love our neighbours as ourselves. And when we do that, it will not be difficult to obey the command in our text—"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Our first glance at this striking precept is enough to show us that, unlike many others in Scripture, it is not absolute, but conditional: it points out an ideal which we are constantly to keep before us, although its perfect attainment here is not always possible. Living, as we live, in an evil world, and coming into contact, as we must come, with evil men and evil

things, we cannot enjoy in full the peace of those who have passed through the great tribulation, and have done with it for ever ; whose serenity is unruffled as the sea of glass before the throne. Fidelity to truth in an environment of error, fidelity to holiness in a world of sin, cannot but lead to collision and conflict. But we are never to arouse anger or hatred by our tempers, or by our unwise methods of attempting to do God service. That is the meaning of the command before us, and of its qualifications. In fact, the life on earth even of the Prince of Peace was one of conflict. It was simply impossible that He should be at peace with the Pharisees, for example. He felt bound to expose their hypocrisies and lay bare their evil motives, rebuking them with words which stung them to the quick, and so aroused their hatred that nothing would content them short of His crucifixion on Calvary. He might have left them alone, foreseeing, as He must have done, what would result from interference ; but as a true moral Reformer, as the King of truth, and as the eternal Word of God, He could not be content to have peace at any price. Nor ought we to be content if we are His followers. Indeed, we cannot be, for we have only to be true to Him ; and even though our lives be obscure and quiet, we shall sometimes understand, in sad experience, our Master's words—"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own ;

but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

The truth is that we who enjoy any measure of spiritual life are left in this present evil world in order that we may fight against the animal nature in ourselves and in others, and the animal nature has teeth and claws, which it does not hesitate to use. All the strange legends of ancient time show that no dragon is slain without fighting. If, ~~for example~~, you enter on a crusade against some popular vice, and dare to inveigh against its prevalence, and seek by legislation or otherwise to lessen its opportunities, you will be hated and hounded by those whose interests or passions run that way; and your gentleness, or fairness, or courtesy, will not avail to turn aside savage attacks on your reputation or on your motives. You cannot snatch the prey from the jaws of a lion without hurting the lion or getting hurt yourself. The Son of God Himself could not redeem the world without a fight with the adversary, even up to the point of death. And as to His disciples, who, in His name, went everywhere preaching the Word, they were persecuted in every city they entered, and were reviled as disturbers of the peace, as men who turned the world upside down! No man knew better than the apostle who wrote these words that it would be folly to give as an *unconditional* command to the followers of Jesus these words—"Live peaceably



with all men." It simply could not be obeyed in a world of sin. }

Besides this, it is our duty to rouse men's thoughts and their consciences, when they would prefer being left alone, and that disturbs peace. Prophets and apostles have often heard the injunction, " 'Prophesy unto us smooth things'—let us have comfortable preaching. We do not go to church in order to be stirred to thought, or made unhappy by suggestions that we are in the wrong. It is a place for consolation, and the Sabbath is a day for rest." Therefore, they are angered if a pet theory is assailed, or if a new interpretation is suggested, which hints that they have been mistaken in their former belief; and still more if sin is pointed out as a something practical, which they themselves are guilty of. A faithful preacher in the present day, as in the past, cannot avoid giving offence, and finds it quite impossible to "live peaceably with all men."

Further, there are occasions when you are bound to resist evil, instead of quietly submitting to it. It is not always so. There are times when only your personal comfort is concerned and you will prove yourself the follower of Jesus by not resisting evil, but rather by suffering wrong, and taking it patiently. Some attacks on one's reputation, for example, are best left alone. Unjust blame may be attached to you which you can only repudiate by involving others in trouble, who are less able to stand it. An unrighteous

law may be put in motion against you, and it may be best for you to suffer in order to arouse public feeling against the wrong, for others' sakes. Lessons of patience and submission are thus learned, which more than anything else help us to know what Paul meant when he spoke of "suffering with Christ," and of "making up what is behindhand of His sufferings."

But such submission is not always right. By too easy submission on your part to a wrong you may sometimes take the heart out of others, who suffer from it too ; you may be secretly sapping the moral strength of the community in which you are, by permitting evil men unresisted to do as they will ; and, by allowing them to get an advantage without a fight, you may be adding to their strength, and making it easier for them to oppress and wrong others. It may be right, therefore, to fight a case in the papers, in the law-courts, on the platform, in the pulpit, or on the battlefield, in defence of truth, or of justice, or of liberty in thought and speech, when it would be much easier to be quiet, and to excuse inaction by quoting the last part of our text only—"Live peaceably with all men."

The battle between good and evil is still going on, and so long as it lasts, and we are within reach of it, we are to put on, and to keep on, the whole armour of God, and to fight as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

I have been suggesting to you a few instances such as Paul may have had in his mind when he

qualified this precept by the words, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

The first of these clauses points, I think, to what lies in our circumstances which may make it impossible to live peaceably—the presence of evil in the world, and so forth; while the second clause refers rather to our own temper and spirit, which is sometimes provocative, rather than pleasant. That which "lieth in you"—your good or bad temper, your tact or tactlessness—is far more under your control than the outward evil, and therefore we had better think chiefly about it. It is very possible that you may provoke others by your angry words or tones, by your irritability or impatience, or by your unwisdom in the choice of time or method for doing what, in itself, is the right thing; and when that is so you are disobeying the command, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." For it obviously does lie in you to be more pleasant, kindly, and tactful than you are. It is this grace we are to seek; not the sloth which will let sleeping dogs lie, because we want to lie still ourselves; not the isolation which, for the sake of peace within and around, will cut us off from contact with a world which seems full of provocation; but a life which, touching that of others at many points, is peaceable. With all our enterprise and energy, we are to be kindly-affectioned one to another, amiable and patient, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a quarrel against any,

gentle and easy to be entreated, pitiful and courteous—in one word, Christlike.

Such is the spirit inculcated in my text. And now let us see where it is needed, and HOW IT MAY BE DISPLAYED IN THE WORLD, IN THE CHURCH, AND IN THE HOME. On each of these in turn I will speak briefly.

Like most good things, this temper is of slow growth, and needs more fostering in the Church itself than most people care to acknowledge. But the persistence of Christian teaching during all these centuries has not been without effect on society at large. There has been ebb and flow in this sea of truth, as in other seas, but progress has been made, even in unchristian society. (1) *Think of our attitude towards war, for example.* I know that our standing armies are a disgrace to us and to civilization, for they were never larger, and they appear to-day as if they were pushing England, and indeed Europe, to the brink of a precipice. The armies of Europe, with their reserves, now number over twenty millions of men, and last year, in our own country, out of a total revenue of about ninety-four millions, we spent no less than sixty millions on war preparation and war-debts. These facts are terrible and tragic in their suggestiveness. I was calculating the other day that if Mr. Charles Booth's scheme of old-age pensions were carried through, and we could assign all this lavish expenditure to such a purpose, every one in the country might receive a pension, not of five shillings weekly,

but of a pound, from the time of reaching the age of sixty-seven. The people are beginning to realize such facts as these, and when they do they will make short work of the militaryism of Europe, where an armed peace is annually more costly than most of our earlier wars. It has been justly said, "The government of the people, for the people, and by the people, is incompatible with all methods of settling international agreements by hiring men to shoot each other for a wage of a shilling a day." And this will be more apparent when it is seen that former opportunities for the display of heroism, which redeemed the battlefield from downright brutality, are rapidly vanishing ; for in the next war a whole regiment may be mowed down without resistance by the turning of a handle, or the noblest ship sunk with all on board by one well-aimed explosive. It is not in democracy, as such, that I have any confidence. A people is almost as easily roused to passion as an autocrat. We lately had a sad example of that, in the reception given by the people and the papers in the United States 'to that unwise message issued by President Cleveland. But, thank God, it was only a temporary madness with them, while our people, instead of taking up the ridiculous challenge, laughed it out of court, a sign of their moral sanity, which at one period would not have appeared. Society is more enlightened than it was, but it is by no means permeated by a Christian spirit. Perhaps the reason for

this lies partly in the misrepresentation of Christian principle, in forgetfulness of the fact that nations, as well as judges, sometimes have to bear the sword as a terror to evil-doers, teaching brutes by the only means they are able to feel. But, take it all round, I believe that even in national affairs the spirit of the age is struggling out of the slough of despond in which it has wallowed so long ; and will come out on the right side, where the road begins to the Celestial City.

Little by little the old war-spirit is waning, and in the altered atmosphere of modern life it will still further diminish, just as the enormous calamities of the carboniferous period have dwindled down into the little mares'-tails of our ditches, because the atmosphere and environment of this country have become so changed. As to war between England and the United States, in spite of foolish and wicked provocations, I do not believe in its possibility for one moment, even if far more were at stake than rectification of boundary with an obscure country, whose position on the map half the people could not point out. With America a war would be fratricide ; and I trust that the voice of each of these nations is ready to say,—

“ I desire  
To reconcile me to his friendly peace ;  
'Tis death to me to be at enmity :  
I hate it, and desire all good men's love.”

To all the nations the message of Jesus Christ is, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

(2) Further, *this message from God has its application to those of us who are seeking to advance truth and righteousness in the world.* Above all others, we are to see that we are not provocative, but kindly and tactful. I fear there is danger sometimes of our mistaking rudeness for faithfulness. I have known some whose moral courage and earnestness left nothing to be desired who have somehow failed to attain the ends they sought. They have provoked where they meant to persuade; and have ultimately lost all influence over those to whom they believed they were sent by God as prophets.

Now it is not difficult to rouse men's tempers by inveighing against their sins, but our aim should rather be to persuade men to be reconciled to God; and this we cannot do if we excite their hostility against us until they no longer will give us a hearing at all. To slash people with your tongue as sinners, or as heretics, will no more convert them than would the rack and the wheel of the Inquisition. You may rouse resentment and deepen defiance, but this only brings into prominence men's lower nature; and it is to the higher nature that you have to appeal, even as Jesus did, who won men from their evil ways by the sheer power of His own loving personality. Still the words are true, "He that *winneeth* souls is wise." It is right

that we should be in dead earnest about the indifference to religion and the immorality which loom ominously before us, but we must also pray for the spirit of Him who loved us while we were yet sinners, and then we shall trust to the power of prayerful affection, rather than of sarcasm and scolding. The gigantic iceberg which a whole regiment of sappers would fail to break up melts away silently and utterly in the warmth of the Gulf Stream. In assailing evil we need the loving spirit of our Lord. While we must not be less firm and courageous in our rebuke of wrong, we want to see more clearly that there is good even in bad men, that there is something worth saving even in those we shrink from, that a man or a woman fallen and disgraced is still a man or a woman loved by the Father we pray to, and died for by the dear Saviour who is not willing that any should perish. Then we shall have the sweet persuasiveness which many of us lack, and shall keep up that atmosphere of loving relationship with those we long to save, in which alone it is possible to *win* souls for heaven. In Christian work, seek, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, to live peaceably with all men."

(3) There is another application which I wish to make of this principle, which is, in some respects, still more important, and is certainly more general, bringing responsibility on us all. *I refer to the application of our text to life in the home-circle.*



I think there are some people, and among them certain professing Christians, who would be all the better if they set themselves to cultivate cheerfulness, and even fun and mirth, instead of brooding like thunder-clouds or stinging like hail-storms. I am persuaded that, while we often inveigh against recognised vices, we do not sufficiently recognise the sinfulness of pride, ill-temper, suspicion, irritability, untruthfulness, and the like. But it is these, rather than those, which hinder our Christian usefulness, and cause the name of our Master to be blasphemed; and there are many homes where the angels' song, proclaiming peace and goodwill, is unheeded, for it is drowned by the sounds of strife and ill-will. Be on your guard, ~~therefore~~, against sarcastic words, which sting and wound, provoking retaliation, and even revenge. Keep yourselves free from small selfishnesses, by which you interfere ruthlessly with the comfort of everybody else in the home, in order that your wishes may be carried out. Drive out, with God's help, the spirit of suspicion, which makes you imagine a bad motive where there is none, and leads you to treat with distrust those who love you well. Beware of irritability, which is ready to take offence for a word, being easily provoked, and always thinking evil. And if you have been hurt, or offended, or wronged, then, for Christ's dear sake, forgive, as you would be forgiven.

I call on you to remember that your home is your

chief training-ground, where bad temper, snappishness, and disagreeableness, with other sins, are to be conquered, in God's strength; and where all the graces of the Holy Spirit, gentleness, goodness, patience, and meekness, are to be fostered and developed. There you are to study each other, and to know yourselves, and to do the duties of each day, not provokingly and suspiciously, but in all gentleness and trustfulness. There you are not to indulge yourself, but to deny yourself, that others may be happier, and may find it easier to be good. For we must never forget that our spirit and temper have a reflex action on others. We cannot live anywhere without affecting the atmosphere of those who come in contact with us, making it harder or easier for them also to resist temptation. The angry man, or the courteous man, creates his special environment, in which others are apt to become like him. You all know that some people are no sooner in your company than they irritate and provoke you, although you cannot tell exactly what they said or did at that particular time. You simply feel as if you had been standing in an east wind, instead of in sunshine, and when you leave them you are worried and irritable. Others have the gift of gossip, and their hints and words not only damage the repute of some acquaintance, but set you in a condition to suspect everybody else. The evil in them rouses the evil that is latent in you,

and for that they are responsible, as well as you. For the sake of others then, as well as for the sake of your own Christian reputation and influence, I do beg you to think more of these so-called little sins, for they impregnate the atmosphere with germs of moral disease, which, like the germs of small-pox, are not only contagious, but certain to leave scars.

One of the greatest preachers of a past generation, John Angell James, of Birmingham, once pertinently said: "Too many have no idea of the subjection of their temper to the influence of religion; and yet what is changed if the temper is not? If a man is as passionate, malicious, resentful, moody or morose after his conversion as before it, what is he converted from or to?"

Depend upon it, brethren, the words of Young are as true as ever: "The first sure symptom of a mind in health is rest of heart and pleasure felt at home"; and all that provokes discord and disturbs peace is not of God, but of the devil, as John plainly tells us.

In our homes and hearts, as on the Sea of Galilee, it is the spirit of evil which raises the storm, and it is the Christ of God who rises in the strength of heavenly serenity to say, "Peace, be still"; and then there is a great calm.

May He give unto us His own serenity, that in the home, and in the Church, and in the world at large, we may be centres and sources of peace. Even in

the midst of evils we are bound to rebuke, and of sins which we dare not leave alone, may we never forget the precept we have thought of this morning, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

HOPE :  
GOD'S ANGEL IN THE HEART

"I will hope continually."—*Ps.* lxxi. 14.

## VIII

### HOPE :

#### GOD'S ANGEL IN THE HEART

**I**T is said that the tendency to take the darker view of things is more deep-seated and more wide-spread than it was. Life was more healthy, effort was more moderate, and nerves were less sensitive in our father's days. The typical men and women represented by the late John Leech may be compared with those more recently sketched by Du Maurier as illustrations of this statement, which, however it may be qualified, is in the main true. Some causes of this change in tendency may be easily detected, and profitably thought over.

During the last quarter of a century a far larger proportion of our population has been crowding into cities. There the rush of life is swifter, the struggle for existence is of necessity harder, and there is less of the old give-and-take, because competitors have little time or inclination for mutual consideration. We see men in crowds rather than as

individuals, and while we are acquainted with more people we know each one of them less intimately. There is consequently a lessening of the amenities of life between employers and workmen, and even between neighbours, and this tends to make the lot of some less hopeful, and the lives of other less helpful.

Besides this, life is now so crowded with incidents that any one of them has less power to arouse sensation. One who moves in what is called "Society" will rush to two or three amusements in a single evening, to be bored more depressingly by each; instead of looking forward to a single pleasure, and afterwards dwelling upon its delightfulness. In this process the very power of enjoyment wears itself out, and the sensitiveness to pleasure which God meant to last for a lifetime is with many paralysed in a few seasons. Although this applies chiefly to a class not represented here, yet in a less exaggerated form it affects us all, so that we too are in danger of losing the zest of life, and lessening the power of happy hopefulness.

Nor should we leave unnoticed the fact that we know far more of the evil in the world than formerly. The desire for sensationalism is so clamant that writers in magazines and newspapers, who naturally watch the trend of public taste, are on the outlook for incidents which will meet this craving, and their selection of events is regarded too often as a fair



picture of modern society, till some forget that there are sacred family relations even in aristocratic circles, and honest men in business, as well as swindlers and ruthless speculators. I suppose that the most popular writer forty years ago was Charles Dickens, and I fear that Emile Zola is the most popular now. In a certain sense both are realistic writers ; but while the former was distinguished for his cheerful optimism, the latter is the apostle of sensuous pessimism. Those two men are typical of the change that has taken place in the tone of society, confirming our belief that it is more difficult now, though it is more important than ever, to cultivate the grace of constant cheerfulness. Nothing could be more opposed to the whole genius of modern worldly society than the resolve of the Psalmist, which, with God's help, we will make our own, " I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more."

Now, that text reminds us that underlying all the tendencies I have alluded to is loss of faith in the control of Providence, and in the value of prayer as a means of human help and consolation. Men who have had that faith, and in proportion to its vividness, have been hopeful and buoyant even when things seemed all against them for evil. For example, Joseph in Egypt was fettered and slandered, he lost both liberty and reputation, he was an alien in race and in religion, and yet he did not abate one jot of heart or hope, for he knew that God was over-ruling

all things for his good, and for the welfare of the elect race. Hence, instead of putting an end to his own life, as many a man would have done, and has done, he made the best of his surroundings, found favour with every one who came in contact with him, made himself necessary to the well-being of others, whether in the palace, or in the prison, and was, therefore, ready to fill a high position when God's time came. Daniel in Babylon was another example of the victory of hopefulness, when inspired by faith in God. Similar illustrations may be drawn from New Testament histories. Peter in prison, John on Patmos, and Paul after his scourging, all echoed the resolve, "I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more."

Many of us, like those men, profess to be children of God. We believe that we are forgiven and reconciled, and may confidently claim the fulfilment of promises given to them. Therefore, as we enter stage after stage of our pilgrimage, not knowing what will befall us, we cannot do better than pray for grace to advance in a hopeful spirit. We are not to be ever on the outlook for terrors and disasters, like Mr. Timorous, but to march forward, well armed, watchful, and confident, like Mr. Greatheart, who proved the deliverer and inspirer of those weaker than himself.

If we are to meet enemies, let us confront them as men confident of victory; if we are to find work

more difficult or less remunerative, let us address ourselves to it as those who believe that a just reward will come in the long run to every good and faithful servant ; and if clouds of sorrow are looming before us, let us look for the bright light that is in them, believing that the sun is shining behind them, and in God's good time will triumph. Every Christian here has far more reason than Byron ever had to say of radiant hope,—

“ Be thou the rainbow to the storms of life,  
The evening beam that smiles the clouds away,  
And tints to-morrow with prophetic ray.”

A few sentences will suffice to remind you of—

I.—THE VALUE OF HOPE.—The later version of the legend of Pandora's box is to the effect that it was filled with winged joys, every god having put in it some blessing for the human race ; but no sooner was the box opened than all the blessings but one flew away, and Pandora only managed to shut it in time to prevent Hope from escaping. Hope, and only hope, was left. Profound observers of life were some of the men who developed those myths, and often you may find in them precious truths about human experience. How true it is that some have lost all but hope. Possibly some here possess very little besides that, of all heaven's blessings. Thank God if hope is still left, for it is better than many a coveted possession.

There is so much to discourage us in life that we want a recognition of hope, and a renewal of it. If we look, for example, at the enterprises of the Church, we may easily be tempted to despondency. Financial losses have been severe, and have fallen heavily on the most thrifty and deserving part of the nation, with the result that those who were the most ready for every good word and work, are now the least able to help. Appeals are being issued on behalf of Missionary Societies, and the claims of the heathen were never more strong, while opportunities for serving them were never more numerous, yet those who would help cannot, and some of those who can help will not, except on an inadequate scale, which will bring them shame in the day of final account. And so with other Societies, which seek to assist ministers whose congregations have been largely drawn to cities, leaving them only the poor, who can hardly keep body and soul together. In confronting these problems with diminished resources, we echo the words of Jehoshaphat: "We know not what to do, but our eyes are up unto Thee." And in answer to our prayer may God inspire each of us with new hope.

But there are causes of depression which come closer home than these. Some perhaps, through physical weakness, feel unfit for the struggle which must be gone through in order to attain worldly success, or even physical livelihood, in an age in which it seems more true than ever that victory is to the strong,

and the weak must go to the wall. When the result of defeat is the suffering of a patient wife, and the hunger of little children, it is no great wonder that the weak man is filled with dread, and needs the inspiration of that hope which is the offspring of childlike faith in God.

Others again have a depressing memory of defeats in moral and spiritual conflict, which makes it hard to look forward to victory. When an evil habit asserts itself for the hundredth time it seems to have superhuman vitality; and so it has, for it is of its father, the devil; but for this the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. It is in Him, not in one's self, that there is still hope.

And where else but in Him shall we gain hope of success in the work we have been trying to do for others? Sunday-school teachers, preachers, and all other Christian workers, must have an abiding assurance that the work is not theirs, but their Lord's, if they would be gladdened by perennial hope. We have failed to reach the hearts of many we would die to save; we have mourned the lapse into practical ungodliness of some who once gave us joy; we have had former sympathy withdrawn from us through misunderstandings which ought never to have arisen, and we feel the absence of some whose prayers were the means of much of the spiritual success we had, as Joshua was helped by the intercession of Moses.

Is all this sent, or allowed, in order to discourage us ? Are these the signs that our work is done, or that at least it is finished so far as a given place, or kind of work is concerned ? No, brethren, but it is intended to break our self-confidence down into utter ruin, and thus make room for the plant of Divine origin, namely, trust in God who is never more near than when He seems far away. Thus, our faith and hope may be in God.

The fact is, that we cannot afford to lose self-distrust or reverence ; for these are essential to any truly religious life. Hope is to be blended with these graces and connected with them, but is not to supersede them. A vessel that carries much sail and no ballast is sure to heel over in a storm. A net which is buoyed up by corks, but has no weight to stretch it out, will be useless to the fishermen ; and while hope is like the sail or the cork, reverent fear is like the ballast or the weight which steadies and preserves. A hope that is merely human is not all that is wanted, for our hope must be both buoyant and yet sure and steadfast, because it has hold on the invisible. It was a man pre-eminently religious who said : " I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more." It is this spirit we want, and for it we must pray.

A few words should now be said about—

II.—THE CULTIVATION OF HOPE.—Like all gifts and graces it may be fostered by culture, or en-

feebled by neglect. This was clearly recognised by the Psalmists and others, who by appeal and effort tried to arouse themselves to hope in God when sorely tempted to yield to depression. No doubt buoyancy is natural to one man and foreign to another. I know families in which a morbid way of looking at everything is characteristic, families in which, with hardly an exception for generations, one after the other looks gloomily on the future, and wakes every morning to expect the very worst that can happen. To such as these the text is out of harmony with their whole bias, and they must put restraint on themselves for years together, and resolutely cultivate the habit of hopefulness, if they would even imperfectly attain this standard. They may be encouraged, as we all may be in our several weaknesses, by the remembrance that God knows our frame, remembers our inborn tendencies, makes all fair allowance for failings which come by heritage, and will cause His grace to abound towards those who need it most. Even in exceptional cases like these the resolve of the Psalmist is not an unattainable blessing, though to them the effort is harder. Not only the stalwart athlete, but the timid tourist, who sees death in every crevasse, may reach the shining table-lands at last, if he will but lean on the arm of the guide, and simply trust and obey him; and it is to such that the guide is most attentive and helpful.

Let us all try then to cultivate the habit of looking on the brighter side of things and of persons. We may be helped to this in part by grateful and devout remembrance of the past. Deliverances already enjoyed are the pledges of future deliverances. The victory already won over some sin is an encouragement to hope for the final conquest of all evil. Promises fulfilled once will be fulfilled again, by our unchanging God. With us a favour granted may be an excuse for refusing it the next time it is asked ; but with Him who is infinite in resource, and changeless in purpose, it is a new evidence of His willingness to help in all the unknown future. Our Ebenezers are sign-posts which point forward as well as backward ; and we have the right to say, nay, it is our duty to say : " Because Thou hast heard me in time past, therefore will I call upon Thee as long as I live."

The same principle is applicable to the views we take of our fellows. Some of us know from experience how easy it is to fall into a habit of suspicion, and how soon this tends to mar the sanctity and helpfulness of our best friendships. We see so little of motive, that it is just as easy to credit a friend with what is ill, as with what is good, and this may be done so often that every kind word which might cheer us is attributed to flattery, offered in the hope of advantage ; and the most natural actions are twisted and distorted, or some hostile intention is read into them, with the result of making us unhappy,



and estranging those who wish us well. Life is too short, and its real sorrows are too numerous, for us to give rein to this evil tendency, even if it were right to indulge it; but it is wrong, and in the sight of our Lord, who looks for the best and grieves over the worst, it is nothing short of a sin. In His name let us pledge ourselves always to look on those around us, particularly on our fellow-members, hopefully, and not suspiciously, nor unkindly.

In regard to our Christian work, too, let us pray for grace to be hopeful, and to register the vow, "I will hope continually." We are serving a God whose power is infinite, and whose love is boundless. The work we are doing in the church, the school, or the mission, is His, not ours. In His own time and way it must prosper. As the familiar stanza puts it,—

" For right is right, since God is God,  
And right the day must win ;  
To doubt would be disloyalty,  
To falter would be sin."

No doubt discouragements abound, but His grace abounds also. We see many who pass out of the sphere of our influence before they are on the Lord's side, and we cannot but be troubled and anxious about them. We know some whose lives are utterly unworthy of their profession, and we long to reach them by rebuke and warning, but we only succeed in offending them, so that they withdraw from our reach

altogether. We preach, or speak, yet how few are truly converted. And how sad it is to see the satisfaction of the Church, though this is so! How little is known of what Paul calls "travailing in birth for souls." How few members of the Church know or care whether there are souls saved or not, or share the joy of angels over one sinner that repenteth. There is, indeed, enough to humble and discourage the earnest Christian worker. Indeed, I do not see how some of us could go on at all unless our hope were in God, rather than in man or in the Church; but because He knows all this, because He will not suffer earnest words to fall to the ground, because He will reward every faithful servant, whether he seems to fail or succeed, we will hope continually, and will yet praise Him more and more.

Cultivate then this habit of hopefulness for your work's sake, for your own sake, and for the good of those around you.

It would be difficult to over-estimate the influence for good of one who is hoping continually. Even dyspeptic Thomas Carlyle wrote: "Give us, O give us the man who sings at his work! Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time, he will do it better, he will persevere longer. One is scarcely sensible of fatigue whilst he marches to music. The very stars are said to make harmony as they revolve in their spheres.

Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, altogether past calculation its powers of endurance. Efforts, to be permanently useful, must be uniformly joyous—a spirit all sunshine, graceful from very gladness, beautiful because bright.”

I should imagine he wrote that when thinking of his wife, rather than of himself; and, if the truth be told, many of us resemble him in that. A wife who sees the brighter side of things often cheers her husband who is losing heart in the strain and strife of life, and the kinder view which she takes of one who has done a wrong saves him from many a broken friendship, and often she proves the angel of reconciliation. Truly it may be said: “A good wife is from the Lord.” Be you husband or wife, parent or child, minister or deacon, teacher or private member, do not expect the worst, but the best, whenever you know that the work is on God’s side. Do not weaken the hands of your brother by saying, or even by thinking: “Try it, but it is sure to fail”; but, on the contrary, hope unto the end, and send on even a forlorn hope to die with a cheer, and not with a wail. If we find, as a Church, that difficulty is to be confronted and sacrifice to be made, let us go forward with the heart of one man, hoping to succeed, and believing that we shall succeed. “According to your faith, so it will be unto you.”

III.—In this sermon, although I have alluded to the natural instinct of hopefulness, on which the

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grace suggested in my text is based, I have kept in mind ITS TRUE SOURCE. Our faith and hope, to be abiding, must be in God. Indeed, this is implied in the latter clause of the verse which runs: "I will yet praise Thee more and more."

We shall see the sunny side of things when we stand on the sunny side of them, and that is the Godward side. This can only be as we continue instant in prayer, and learn to take the view which our Lord takes of what the world calls loss, disappointment, or failure. When Christ was on earth He did not evade what causes our heartaches. Looked at from the standpoint of a worldling, like Pilate, or of a sceptic like Caiaphas, His whole mission was a failure; indeed, at first it seemed a failure to His own followers, as the two who walked to Emmaus frankly confessed. Yet Jesus, who knew this better than any one, could have said even in hours of sadness, "I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more." Paul reminds us of that, when he says of his Lord and ours, "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame"—in other words, Jesus Christ was sustained by hope of reigning over those whom He had redeemed from sin and death. Such a hope stretches far beyond the visible transient world in which we live. It is possible for you to enjoy it. Before you lies a steep rough pathway of duty, which nevertheless trends upwards; and though the

narrow gorge of life is gloomy, damp and hard, yet if you will you may see the angel-guide God has sent to meet you, and that white-winged angel will light up the darkness, nor will the light fade away till it is merged in the greater brightness of Heaven, of whose inhabitants it is said, "They need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light." This valley of trouble, toil, and death will soon be left behind for ever.

If you would experience this, let me beg you to enter the path of holiness and love, which is still marked by the footsteps of Jesus, who left us an example that we might follow His steps, and who now in spirit stands beside each struggling soul who strives to climb from the low level of sin to the shining tablelands of holiness. Then yours shall be the good hope through grace, which maketh not ashamed, and is as an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast. The valley of death will no more affright, and the struggle of life will no more dishearten, for, trusting to one who is ever near and ever loving, you shall "Go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

"Praise Him, my soul ! nor ever cease thy praising,  
 Though olive tree and vine be blighted in the raising ;  
 Though flood and frost and fire assail me in one morning,  
 And though my heart's desire shall perish without warning ;  
 Still shall His rivers flow, the heavens declare His glory,

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Still shall His green things grow, His winds repeat their  
story,

And I, who sit to-day beneath the cloud of sorrow,  
And see no opening way to sunshine for the morrow,  
Still by His mighty Word upheld in fresh endeavour,  
Will magnify the Lord and bless His name for ever."

"I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee  
more and more."

COMPLETE SANCTIFICATION

“ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,”—1 *Thess.* v. 23.



## IX

### COMPLETE SANCTIFICATION

THERE is something exceptionally beautiful about Paul's love for his converts.

*Paul's* His affection for the Thessalonians may have been the more tender because they had treated him with kindness, which would be the more appreciated as a contrast to his experience at Philippi whence he had just escaped on the occasion of his visit to their city.)

Be that as it may, he himself likens the love he felt for them to that of a father toward his children, or of a mother nursing her own little ones. And the purer his love, the higher were the blessings he longed for on their behalf. Hence he prays here not that his friends may escape persecution, or have worldly prosperity; but that in Christian character they may be wholly God's.)

To desire such a benediction for others is one of the best signs of newness of life, for this is what Jesus Himself was seeking when He came here to save His people from their sins, and to present them faultless before His Father's face in glory.

Human love is so mixed with alloy that we are not naturally anxious that our friends should be faultless, but are rather gratified when we see that they are no more perfect than ourselves, and are not always displeased when their failings are pointed out. It seems to raise us higher if they are just a little lowered, for a tree which is by no means tall begins to look tall when all those around it are cut down to a lower level. And in addition to this common yet sinful tendency to disparagement, prejudices and animosities play a very important part in our judgment of others, and in our desires for them. Listen, for example, to what a Tory will sometimes say of Mr. Gladstone, or to what an ultra-Radical will say of Lord Salisbury. It is simply shameful that on either side there should be such prejudice as to warp the judgment, and falsify the view we take of great and good men. But this I say is natural, and is so common that it passes without rebuke, and almost without notice; and comparatively few heed the command, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." I say that this prevalence of prejudice, and this wish to be thought better than our neighbours, often prevent us from earnestly desiring their true ennoblement, and from praying for their redemption from all evil, that they may be blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It may be thought that Paul prayed here for what

he was never likely to see ; that his ideal of character was altogether too high to be practical. He himself, no doubt, was exceptional in his saintliness, with aspirations higher and capacities greater than those of others, and besides this he had special functions, as an apostle, which might render such saintliness as is here spoken of possible to him as a peculiar personal grace. But this complete consecration was surely altogether out of the range of these ordinary Thessalonians, who were busy amid the traffic and trade of that great centre of commerce. Paul did not think thus. He did not regard it as at all impossible that men who are fully occupied in ordinary work at home, or in the city, should be sanctified wholly and made blameless unto the coming of the Lord. In fact the New Testament teaching generally goes to show that unless we are being sanctified altogether, we are not being truly sanctified at all. For good Matthew Henry was quite right when he said of true holiness, "it is symmetry of soul" ; and surely that is possible to any one who is a new creature in Christ Jesus. Do not be afraid then to hope for yourselves or to ask on behalf of those in your family, or in your class, or among your friends, for this complete sanctification. Remember that you are likely to rise higher, if you aim high, in this as in all things else. Even Lord Chesterfield (who knew little or nothing about God's work in the soul) had sense enough to say, " Aim at perfection in everything, though in

most things it is unattainable, for they who aim at it and persevere will come much nearer to it than those whose laziness and despondency make them give it up as unattainable." This counsel may be still more boldly applied to Christian perfection, for Christ died to free us from all sin, and promises such freedom as the ultimate goal of every true life. For this is the will of God, even your "perfection." I trust there is no Christian here who cannot say to his children, or to those he teaches in the school or congregation, the very God of peace "sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

(1) We will first remind ourselves that in this remarkable phraseology Paul specifically includes *the whole nature of man* as that which should be, and may be, sanctified.

The apostle did not set himself up as a psychologist; but in his analysis of our nature here and elsewhere he was a good deal nearer the truth than some who make more boast in that direction. I believe in the Holy Trinity, three persons in one God; and I believe also in the tri-partite nature of man, another trinity in unity; and probably we shall learn far more of God by studying ourselves, than by studying other visible works of God.

Not only here, but elsewhere in Scripture, a man is spoken of as consisting of body, soul, and spirit;

and these three are one, the man himself is one in three. *The body* (τὸ σῶμα) is the physical part of us, that through which we are seen and known, and by which we see and know visible and tangible things. It connects us with the material world, and is the channel of communication between ourselves and it. Through the body we see and hear and endure pain or pleasure, while on the other hand through it we make ourselves felt by the world around. The body is so evidently a part of us that we can hardly think of existing apart from it, and yet is so inferior a portion of us, that when it has returned to its native dust, we shall not only be existing but emancipated.

By *the soul* (ἡ ψυχὴ), as Paul calls it, is meant what we may call the lower soul, which we share with the brutes, but which in us is ennobled by the Spirit. To it belong our affections, our memory, our judgment, and other qualities not visible, yet not essentially spiritual. As the body connects us with the earthly, so the soul connects us with the human.

*The "spirit"* (τὸ πνεῦμα) is what we now generally call the soul of a man. It is his distinctive part, his highest nature. All the longings after God described in Scripture, and known by ourselves, belong to it. In short, it connects us with the eternal, as the soul unites us to the human, and the body to the material.

This, I say, is Paul's analysis of our nature, and

when he prays that we may be sanctified "body, soul and spirit," he desires that there shall be no part of our nature untouched, unchanged, unsanctified by the Spirit of God.

(2) *What then is this sanctifying?* Wherein will it appear when this prayer is answered?

To "sanctify" is to set something apart for a holy purpose, so that it may be regarded as holy, and as being profaned if used for a lower purpose. To distinguish between "sanctification" and "consecration," <sup>we</sup> should say the latter represents the human, and the former the Divine side of the same act or experience.

~~We~~ "consecrate" ~~yourself~~ when ~~you~~ yield yourself up to God, for Him to do with ~~you~~ what He wills, laying ~~yourself~~ as it were upon the altar as a living sacrifice.

God "sanctifies" ~~you~~ when ~~He~~ accepts this offering, and conforms ~~you~~ to His Son. Hence ~~you~~ are not told that you must wholly "sanctify" ~~yourself~~, but the God of peace is asked to effect this for ~~you~~. Similarly, Jesus prays in His final intercession on earth for His disciples, "sanctify them through Thy truth." But in the same prayer, alluding to Himself, He says, "for their sakes I sanctify myself," a solemn declaration in which He claims the divine as well as the human power. What He meant was that He had set Himself apart for the holy purpose of redeeming man, even by the sacrifice of Himself;

and this was a sacrifice not confined to Calvary though it was consummated there.

If, ~~therefore~~, you would see what it is to be "sanctified," look to Jesus. *His body* was sanctified; for all its powers were used in absolute accordance with the will of God. His feet, to hasten to the bed of pain, or the haunt of the sin-stricken. His hand, to raise the dead, and to save the sinking. His eyes, to look with ineffable pity on the city which spurned Him, or with silent rebuke on the disciple who denied Him. His voice, to teach with such ineffable wisdom and power as to constrain even His enemies to say, "Never man spake like this Man!" Even in what we may call the ordinary scenes of His life there was the same sanctity. He took part in festivities; and though some dared to say, "Behold, a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber," they knew the charge was false; for by His holy presence He made every meal a sacrament, and every social gathering sacred. To be sanctified is to be like Him; so that on the tables of the home, and on the ledgers in the office, on our warehouses and marts, it shall be as though in letters of light these words were blazoned, "Holiness unto the Lord."

Again, *the soul* is to be sanctified.

In other words, your mental powers, your capacities of hoping and loving, are all to be sacred. There are those who talk of what they are pleased to call "carnal reason." They seem to imagine, for

example, that religious truth is to be dealt with by different faculties from those employed in the study of science, and they are horrified at those who study Scripture by comparing its various manuscripts, and by throwing on it the light of ordinary history. It goes without saying that irreverence and flippancy ought to find no place in the study of these records, which if true affect men's eternal destiny; but when reverence rules the keenest intelligence may be applied to God's truth, and is itself to be regarded as holy. In an earnest Christian man, who is sanctified, body, soul and spirit, there is no such thing as "carnal reason."

Similarly with the *affections*. How many have misread God's teaching, by taking Him to mean that affection should be sacrificed, and that the highest religious condition can only be reached by those who have subdued and even extirpated it. "Love is of God," and this is not only true of love to Himself, but of the affection on which our homes are based, and our friendships rest. Affection is not to be destroyed but ennobled, and your whole *soul* is to be sanctified, as well as your body and spirit.

It may seem strange to speak about sanctifying the *spirit*; for if that be the highest part of man, it would seem to follow that it is essentially holy. But it is not. Some of us know from sad experience that even our more devotional moods have their



perils, and that pious people, in what they believe to be their religious duties, are in danger of pride, and self-sufficiency, of bigotry and uncharitableness. Aye, brethren, we need to be cleansed from secret faults and kept back from presumptuous sins. Only God can keep us. If He does, our whole "body, soul and spirit" shall be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. *This complete sanctification is a necessity if we would be conformed to the likeness of our Lord.* Any part of our nature may become a channel of temptation unless the whole be sanctified.

It is of no use to keep the body in the posture of devotion, or to use the voice in tuneful praise, if the affections are not guarded, if the temper is not controlled, and if the spirit is not really surrendered to God. Such an one may fall, as Judas fell.

Indeed it is possible to be sanctified in body and soul, yet not in spirit. Thus it was, I think, with Peter, who was ready to sacrifice his physical life, and had braced up his *soul* to face any danger ; but he relied on his own strength, and had not humbly yielded his *spirit* to the Lord, for help and succour.

On the other hand, we must not cultivate the *spirit* only. Those have done so who have severed themselves from the world, instead of being kept from the evil in it. The soul has been so ignored that affections or ambitions have not been sanctified ;

or the body has been neglected till its weakness has brought despondency on the soul, and darkness over the spirit. In short, our enemies are so watchful that even the little postern as well as the great gates of Mansoul must be guarded and kept by One more watchful than ourselves.

Unless we be thus sanctified we cannot serve God effectually. Only the holy can diffuse holiness. A man must be wise, in order to impart wisdom. He must be kind, if he would cause others to be kind. And he must needs be holy if he would advance the reign of holiness. As well expect salt to preserve what it touches, after it has lost its own savour, as imagine that we can truly serve the God of holiness, when we ourselves are not sanctified. Hence it is not merely for our own sakes, but for the world's sake, and for Christ's sake, that we must seek for ourselves and our fellow-believers complete sanctification.

4. *But whence is it to come?* Evidently not as the result of our own effort. Our text, especially in the original, where emphasis is strong on "God Himself," suggests that it is in Him, not in ourselves, that we have hope. This is clearer in the Revised Version. In the verses immediately preceding our text Paul exhorts the Thessalonians as to what *they* were to do. Then suddenly he turns from the work of the human will, to the work of the Divine Spirit; and says, "The God of peace Himself sanctify you

wholly." And in the next verse he encourages them to believe that this will be so by the declaration, "Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it." I suppose God is emphatically called the God of *peace*, because peace follows on complete sanctification; for if a man is "blameless" he is not likely to ruffle others or to be ruffled by them; and even in his relations with the all-seeing God, he may be perfectly at peace, knowing that for him there is no condemnation. This Paul had realized in his own experience, for his old vehement temper, and his tendencies to bitter sarcasm and intense hatred, were exchanged, after his conversion, for sweetness and serenity, amid cares and troubles such as few have ever had to endure.

If then we ourselves would experience anything of this sanctification and blamelessness, we have simply to yield ourselves unto God. We may have tried to repress evil temper, or to forgive some one who has wronged us, or to rid ourselves of some besetting sin, but our failure has been so apparent that we are ready to give up. Instead of giving *up*, give *in*. Yield yourself fully unto God. Believe that He is more concerned to deliver you from all evil than you are to be delivered. Let your Lord do for you what you cannot do, and what no outward advantages can effect for you. Some of you have lingered too long beside the pool of Bethesda, waiting for some man to come and put you into

its waters, through his eloquence or earnestness ; but meantime the living Saviour is standing close by unheeded, as He asks, "Wilt thou be made whole?" May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly !

5. It remains yet to notice that there *is a special motive for desiring this* hinted at in the text. It is the coming of the Lord Jesus. All through the New Testament are signs that the early disciples lived in joyful expectation of His advent ; and this is most evident in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, to whom, when present among them, Paul had specially spoken about Christ's kingship.

Dear brethren ! we too ought to be looking forward to that good time coming, and not always looking back, even though it be to the cross of Calvary. At our sacramental feast we remember His death ; but, as Jesus Himself said, we do also show forth His death until He come. We know but little of the nature of that advent, but that either through death, or perhaps in life, we shall see Him in His glory, with all the holy angels round about Him, is among the absolute certainties of our Christian faith.

How shall we dare to confront Him, if we are still stained and defiled, when we might have been whiter than snow ? What will be our excuse if we be found cherishing some evil feeling against our brother, or indulging some pet sin we were not willing to give up ?

How fast the years are slipping by! How swift and sudden may be the Lord's coming to some of us, who in our carelessness and folly have said, "My Lord delayeth His coming." And shall we not be ashamed to appear as we are—ungenerous, unforgiving, impure, irreverent, and prayerless? What is our professed hope but that we may have the will of God fulfilled in us? And this is the will of God, even our perfection. What is the aim of life if it be not conformity to the image of His own Son? To that we must be tending now, if in the day of His coming we are to appear blameless, for His advent will but complete a process already begun. What says the beloved disciple about His coming? "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." And it is that transformation which we should most eagerly seek, because in it, not in change of place or condition, we shall find our heaven. When good old Rowland Hill was dying, some friend beside his bed tried to cheer him by saying, "You are going to be with Jesus, and to see Him as He is." "Yes," said the old preacher, with emphasis, "and I shall be *like* Him: *that* is the crowning point!" Oh, to be completely transformed into the likeness of His dear Son! May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Then shall we see Thee as Thou art,  
For ever fix'd in no unfruitful gaze,  
But such as lifts the new-created heart,  
Age after age, in worthier love and praise."

THE FRUITION OF FULLER LIFE

“The fruit of the Spirit.”—*Eph.* v. 9.



## X

### THE FRUITION OF FULLER LIFE

**A**BUNDANT fruitbearing, whether it appear in character or in service, depends on the quickening of spiritual life. Everything else is subordinate to this, although much else is to be desired. Stronger convictions about religious truth and the modes of its revelation, a right attitude towards the social problems which clamour for settlement, a wiser and freer adaptation of our methods of work and worship to the altered conditions of our time, are all to be earnestly desired and prayerfully sought ; but these will be of little value unless we are living Christians, made strong and glad by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is useless to add new and ingenious inventions to a machine if it has not motive power enough to do its appointed work ; but of this folly we are guilty if, while we discuss and alter rules and methods, we neglect prayer, for it is the only nexus between Divinely generated force and humanly devised machinery. Hence, there is no sign more full of promise to the Churches just now than the

frequent and impassioned whisper heard among us,  
 "Brothers, let us pray!"

It may not seem to outsiders that success in religious work depends on this. They may attribute it to social or intellectual influences, but in so far as success is spiritual (and that alone abides) its source is not in us. Spiritual power only passes through us from above to enrich the world. Men see the outflow of our charities and of our teachings flooding the world with promise, but we have to point them beyond ourselves, and to repeat the testimony of the great poet-prophet of our generation :

"This wealth of waters might but seem to draw  
 From yon dark cave : but, son, the source is higher,  
 Yon summit half a league in air : and higher,  
 The cloud that hides it : higher still, the heavens  
 Whereby the cloud was moulded, and whereout  
 The cloud descended. FORCE IS FROM THE HEIGHTS."

What else but this is the meaning of our Lord's promise, "Ye shall be endued with power from on high"?

The "power" spoken of in those words of Jesus is the outcome of more abundant life. All the figures used in the New Testament to describe its nature or its manifestation indicate this. Our Lord speaks, for example, of the vine with its branches, and St. Paul of the body with its members, both being types of inherent and growing life. The same idea underlies the figures used to describe our work—labourers in

the vineyard, and builders of God's habitation, for they denote intelligent, living activity, the very reverse of that which is mechanical and dead. Both blessedness and usefulness, I say, depend, according to the teaching of our Lord and His disciples, on the intensity and vigour of Divine life in the soul.

This is not without its suggestions on the nature of true unity. Where life is, variety must be. The leaves whisper it, the differing notes of the song-birds celebrate it, and teeming creatures in air and earth and sea remind us of it. And the higher the life the greater its variety; whether you regard a man in contrast with a brute, or whether you compare civilised people, having numberless subdivisions of work and pleasures, with a savage tribe in which occupations are few. We must not, therefore, expect greater sameness when we go still higher, but must recognise unity in the identity of life rather than of form. We have not so much to pray for unity as for grace to perceive it as existing already in all who worship the same God, and are filled with the same Spirit. And it is in proportion to the vigour of the devotional spirit that we find this unity asserting itself. When we discuss our methods of Church government, or when we seek to define Christian thought in creed, we diverge; but when we pray or praise we are consciously one in Christ. Hence it is that our best hymns, coming though they do from men differing widely in opinion, express the feeling

and hope of us all. The orthodox are meekly led by a Unitarian as they sing,—

“ In the Cross of Christ I glory,  
 Towering o'er the wrecks of time.  
 All the light of sacred story  
 Gathers round its head sublime.”

The zealous Protestant does not hesitate to pray in the words of a Roman Catholic,—

“ My God, I love Thee—not because  
 I hope for heaven thereby.”

While a Ritualistic congregation heartily sings these words of a simple-minded Congregationalist,—

“ There is a land of pure delight,  
 Where saints immortal reign,  
 Infinite day excludes the night,  
 And pleasures banish pain.”

How do we account for this anomaly? Thus, that in their highest moments of inspiration and worship, the followers of Christ are one. Their songs of adoring love are the offspring of the One Spirit who worketh in every man severally as He will; and as the samphire only grows on cliffs above the reach of the sea, so these songs are above high-water mark, untouched by the surge and spray of controversy. Unity, therefore, will be rejoiced in as we live on that level—as we become enriched with higher and fuller life.

Now, we believe that spiritual life in the soul of

man depends on the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, who both initiates and intensifies it. Jesus Himself said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." But the Holy Spirit is not some mysterious deity dwelling far off from us in majesty unapproachable. He is near us, with us, in us, if we are loving God at all, and are seeking to serve Him. It may be said of the Spirit of God, as of the law of God, we have no need to try and bring Him down from above, for He is nigh us. In Him, as in an atmosphere, we live, and move, and have our being, and what we want is to open the secret avenues of our nature and give Him welcome. There is no unreadiness with God to fill us to the full with spiritual life and power, for our Lord expressly assures us that He bestows this gift more readily than any earthly father bestows a good thing on the children he loves. Our enjoyment of it simply depends on our fulfilling the condition laid down by the risen Christ, "If any man open the door, we will come in to him." Let us take down the bars and chains which our own self-confidence and pride, our sensuousness and worldliness have forged and fastened. Humbly yet hopefully let us fling open our thoughts and affections, and our hearts will be filled with His fulness, as our homes, with doors and windows opened wide, are flooded with light and warmth on some sweet summer day. What is wanted, I say, is that we should put ourselves in the

right attitude to God, in order to be filled with the Spirit ; and the right attitude is that of prayer and praise. If this is really ours, we may look (in fact we ought to look) with eager expectation for results which we ourselves may enjoy, and over which others, too, may rejoice.

Let me invite you, therefore, to consider the FRUITAGE OF A FULLER LIFE, IN YOURSELVES AND IN THE CHURCH.

I. *We are often reminded in Scripture that fruit is expected of us.* When our Lord went up to the fig tree, on His way to Jerusalem, and found no fruit on it, but leaves only, He uttered the only curse which fell from His gracious lips, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever," and at once the fig tree withered away. Every child knows that this was an acted parable, setting forth the curse that must fall on those who bear none of the fruits of the Spirit. Christ's spoken parables confirm our conviction of that solemn truth. St. Paul, too, in his Epistles sets forth the same Divine expectation of result from quickened life, and again and again he describes and commends the fruits of the Spirit—"fruits," you observe, a sure reminder that these graces are not to be put on, but are to be put forth by the power of life within. There may be proprieties observed, and certain virtues practised by those to whom the Heart-searcher must sadly say : "Ye have no life in you." For these virtues and proprieties may be only

like the ornaments on a child's Christmas tree, glittering in the glare of lights soon burnt out, and tied loosely to a tree without root. No one would call these "fruit," for fruit is the outcome of life.

What is true of each Christian is equally true of the community of Christians, which we call the Church. It may have attached to it social prestige, æsthetic worship, numerous adherents, intellectual culture ; but these may not be "fruits," they may not be evidences of life. Therefore, what we want, what we should pray for, is that the spiritual life of our Churches should be quickened, that once more in their midst the Lord Himself may appear repeating His sweet, familiar words, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

It would not be possible in the time at our disposal to allude to all the fruits which we may hope to see springing from a more vigorous life, but I will just point out a few specimens of those we too seldom see in the debilitated Christian life with which we are sadly familiar.

*Zeal* for the salvation of souls has become with some professing Christians an unmeaning phrase, or at least an unpopular one, although sinners never needed more than now a Saviour from sin, from self, from pessimism, and from hell here and hereafter. We have abandoned some of the phraseology, and some of the conceptions of our fathers, and I am glad

certain of these have vanished from us; but the abiding facts of sin and holiness, of future recompense and retribution, still remain. It was no mere wish to alter men's intellectual conceptions of God, it was no mere kindly desire to display the possibility of a holy life, that brought about the incarnation, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of the Son of God; but, as He Himself declared, He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Do we honestly believe that? If so, how comes it that many who profess to be His followers are more eager in philanthropies, and even in amusements, than in the work of evangelisation at home and abroad? We do not complain so much of the sparsity of contributions; as of the lack of earnestness among our Church members about the relation to Christ held by themselves and those dear to them as well as by the world at large. Our people lay their sacrifice on the altar—money, talent, organisation—and then plenty of them are ready to pour cold water on it, as in Elijah's days. But where is the prophet aflame with zeal? Where is the answering fire which will consume the sacrifice, and lick up the water that is in the trench? Let us never forget that the world will test us by the presence or absence of this Divine fire. Men are still willing to say, "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God." There are some encouraging signs that fresh zeal is being kindled. Foreign Missions have become



dearer to God's people, and effort and sacrifice are appearing here and there like flecks in the whirling disc, which promise that the whole shall shine brightly at last. Indeed, among the heathen themselves such signs are being multiplied even more rapidly than among us, and the rich Church of Laodicean England is being put to shame by the Philadelphian converts abroad, who use their little strength, and have not denied Christ's name. Think of that little Church on the Congo, for example, which, with only fourteen members, sent forth into surrounding heathenism two of their brethren, and entirely supported them in their work! If we made the same sacrifice at home, more than one of our Churches would be maintaining single-handed over 100 brethren and sisters as missionaries here or abroad.

Then what of London? so desperate in its misery, so degraded in its vices, that it is more like Babylon than heaven, while many seem content to have it so. Lying at the root of all the wretchedness, which we very properly try to relieve, is sin. What is starvation, in its initial cause, but wrong done by man to his fellow? What is the misery of a drunkard's home, but wrong done to himself and his dear ones by the drunkard? What is despair, but wrong done to a merciful God who is forgotten or despised? And it was to deliver us and all men from sin, which is the source of these woes, that Jesus Christ became

incarnate. He is not willing that any should perish, but longs that all should come to repentance.

Christ came to bring us together, in spite of the fissures and chasms which separate class from class in modern society. He was the true Curtius who flung Himself into the yawning abyss, and it closed over His sacrifice, so that men in the Roman Empire, widely sundered as they then were, met together as brethren, philosopher and gladiator, master and slave, eating at the same table, sharing the same joys and griefs, till the astonished world exclaimed, "See how these Christians love one another!" With grateful memory of that, we do not want to see or to start "working men's churches," though the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon movement will tend thereto, unless it be wisely and firmly controlled. Still less do we want to see middle-class Churches with the smug satisfaction which is more offensive than aristocratic hauteur. We want (nay, our Lord wants) to see a zealous Church bringing all men under its influence and into its family life, that once more the rich and the poor may meet together, for the Lord is the Maker of them all.

In this direction let us eagerly look, and meantime avail ourselves of all that may tend to bring it about, for Milton was right when he said,—

"Zeal and duty are not slow,  
But on Occasion's forelock watchful wait."

Again, amid the fruitage of a fuller Christian life will be found that *love* which our Lord makes much of, and of which some of His followers think so little. It is a strange thing that among good people there is so much bad temper. They do not seem to regard it as a sin. They would excommunicate a drunkard, they would not listen to any teacher who was said by wiseacres to be a heretic, they would not rob, or murder, or commit any such sin, but their home is miserable through their irritability, their employees are thankful to see their backs, and their minister and some of their fellow-members often smart under the lash of their cruel tongues. Well, if these people are right in their self-complacency, then our Lord and His Apostles were wrong in insisting upon love, on courtesy, on kindly tempers, acts and deeds, as being "fruits of the Spirit." The Church is intended to foster perfect characters. Its meetings are never to be desecrated by angry words, unjust suspicions, or dogged obstinacy, and these will disappear from a living Church as dead leaves are pushed off in springtime by the budding life behind them.

Surely we might also look for more love between Christian Churches. The selfish isolation that can never see a want beyond its own borders, the paltry jealousy of a weaker Church, and the calm self-complacency of a stronger one; the niggardliness that refuses counsel or help, and the pride that de-

clines to accept it ; all these would be supplanted by meekness, charity, and self-sacrifice, for the same mind would be in us that was also in Christ Jesus.

We have been praying for fuller spiritual life. It becomes us to expect an answer, and to look with confidence for fruitage, which is abundant in variety, though we have only pointed to two examples of it. If you would be reminded of more, you only have to turn to those words of Paul, in his letter to the churches in Galatia, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law, and they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh, with the passions and the lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk. Let us not be vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another."

II. It remains that we should notice *certain conditions on which fuller spiritual life depends*. All life has its conditions—God-ordained, inexorable, changeless. Whether in nature or in grace, we must put ourselves into harmony with those conditions, or successful culture is impossible. Disregard of them will cause the noblest tree in our garden to wither, and the brightest child in our home circle to fade and die. Of late years this truth has been insisted on in certain circles with almost tiresome iteration, and social reformers of a philosophic type are constantly

dinning the word "environment" into our ears. And we frankly admit that we must change the environment of our most hopeless classes if we would expect in them change for the better ; improving miserable homes, increasing inadequate wage, and sweeping away temptations to drink, which now can hardly be escaped. Amidst all this, however, we must not forget the power of human choice, the freedom of will which may prefer the evil to the good ; for without inward change mere alteration of surroundings will do but little. But what I wanted to say was this : that as environment affects physical and social life, so it also affects spiritual life—for good or evil. In order that this life may be vigorous and fruitful, we want more than a spasm of prayer, more than a single act of consecration. It must be the habit of our life to maintain the conditions on which God has made spiritual vigour to depend.

Like all other life, it requires *nourishment*, and this we are to take, not with fitful infrequency, but constantly, as those who have been taught to pray, "give us this day our daily bread." A cold-blooded reptile may gorge himself once in the week and flourish on his one meal, but a living Christian cannot—though a good many try to do so.

But devotional study, and even the reading of Holy Scripture for one's own spiritual profit, appears to me to be increasingly rare in Christian homes.

We ministers are by no means free from that danger ; indeed, to us it is intensified by the constant duty of seeking something for the instruction of others which asserts itself as a habit in the too few quiet hours which a life of bustling activity permits. Some of us are in sore peril of having to make the shameful confession, "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

Even those who boldly accept the teaching of the Higher Criticism have no reason to hesitate for a moment in resorting to inspired Scripture as God's own revelation of spiritual experiences and truths, which feed the soul by means of thought and prayer ; while, above all, we find in the Gospels that Saviour-Friend, who was the Incarnate Word, the Image of the Invisible God, whose life is the true source of our life, as He Himself declared, when He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life." The profound truth enshrined in such utterances is not to be reached by exegesis, but by devotion ; and when all our learned scribes fail to help us, we learn what we want to know if we go in prayer to Jesus, saying, "Lord, declare unto us this parable."

Let us treat this Book, which is dear to us all, not as a scientific treatise, but as a moral and spiritual revelation. In the rebound from a superstitious regard for the mere letter of it, let us beware of substituting intellectual acuteness for devotional re-

sponsiveness ; for a man may die of hunger while analysing the bread which was meant to feed him.

But there is another condition of life to be noticed. *Atmosphere* is as important as nourishment.

Children require fresh air as well as food. Even the strongest man becomes depressed and his vitality lowered if he remains long in a vitiated atmosphere ; but he becomes exhilarated, shaking off gloom and brooding, when he strides onward in the bracing air of a sunny hill-side. And that is the idea suggested to my mind by the declaration of the Psalmist about the happy "people who know the joyful sound, they shall walk all day in the light of Thy countenance."

Do we ? Do our Churches ? Is our up-going and on-going made cheerful by the constantly realized presence of the Lord ? Do we go to work with Him as did the fishermen on the lake ? Does He talk with us till our hearts burn within us as He opens to us the Scripture ? When assailed by doubts, does He reveal Himself as One so gracious, and true, and real, that we can only say adoringly, with doubting Thomas, "My Lord and my God" ? If this be so, we shall understand God's whispers, we shall read the glance of His eye, we shall hear the onward march of our Divine helpers in signs as natural as the whispering of the mulberry trees.

Perhaps more than in anything else our Churches are deficient in a devotional atmosphere, which will make their social engagements sweet and wholesome,

and transform into Sacraments the feasts they spread for God's poor. The atmosphere of a Church, be it worldly or Christlike, insidiously but surely affects its whole character and work, and it is because so often germs of evil infest it that nominal Christians are anæmic and enfeebled, ready to withdraw from wholesome activity, or to be prostrated by attacks of unbelief.

In our homes and in our Churches, then, but, above all, in our own secret experience, let us steadily maintain close fellowship with God, and then spiritual life will develop into Christly service, and ultimately into the blessedness of Heaven.



BUILDING IN SILENCE

“And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither : so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.”—1 *Kings* vi. 7.

## XI

### BUILDING IN SILENCE

THE silence amid which the building of Solomon's Temple was carried on was partly due to the reverential feeling in which that holy work was undertaken. The deepest emotions in the human heart are generally the quietest. Our profounder feelings shrink from babble and noise. If we stand before a masterpiece of art and try to take in the harmonies of colour, or the symmetry of form, the frivolous remarks of a companion distress us. If we walk in the depths of a forest glade, or if we delight our eyes with the falling of gleams and of shadows upon the sward till we are lost in a pleasant day-dream, an incursion of jocund excursionists is resented as being almost a sacrilege. If we have to say farewell to friends we love, and the hour of parting, long-dreaded, has come at last, we feel that it is not a time for fluent talk, or for sparkling fun, but rather for the silent grip of the hand and the tearful "God bless you!" And when we enter some stately cathedral,

rich in solemn associations, it is natural that we should be hushed and quiet.

It was with some such feeling that the prophet Habakkuk exclaimed, "The Lord is in His Holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him"; and in harmony with that sentiment wise King Solomon commanded that Jehovah's Temple should be built quietly, "and the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." One of the first lessons, therefore, which this verse teaches us is that flippancy and thoughtlessness are altogether out of place when we work or worship in the presence of our God. Ours should be the seriousness of men who feel that God is near, who listen to the heavenly voice which says, "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

But besides this, the silent building of the Temple was symbolical of spiritual truths. There is a nobler building which God is rearing through the work of Apostles and teachers, who, as wise master builders, have begun on the true foundation. Referring to it, Paul asks the Corinthians, "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Elsewhere he refers to this building as being "fitly framed together," and says "it groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God

through the Spirit." In that passage, the idea of silence is involved ; for the Apostle does not describe the building as arising with the noise of carpenters and masons, but as growing like a flower under the gentle dews and silent sunshine.

The spiritual temple ~~to which Paul refers~~ will be in its day of completion far nobler than that of Solomon. It will never be pillaged, as that was when Shishak, King of Egypt, came and took away its treasures—for of the unseen temple it is said no thief can break through and steal. It will never be polluted as Zion's Temple was by the wickedness of Manasseh—because "there can in no wise enter into it anything that defileth nor worketh abomination." And it can never be destroyed, as Solomon's was when Nebuzaradan burnt the House of the Lord—for it is built of living stones which can never perish.

It is of this spiritual temple, and of our work in building it, that we are taught something in our text to-day which may, with God's blessing, encourage us, whether we are upbuilding our own Christian character, or are training children and influencing friends who will become living stones in the true temple.

We learn from our text then :—

#### I.—THAT BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE OFTEN DO A SECRET WORK.

Most of the work of Solomon's Temple was done where it would not show for much. Workmen were

in the quarry cutting and shaping those stupendous stones whose size is still the wonder of the world, and whose accuracy of fit is so exquisite that the blade of a knife can hardly be inserted between them. Other labourers in the plain between Succoth and Zarthan were forming clay moulds in which the molten metal might be shaped. Others were away in the forest of Lebanon, where axes were ringing, and giant trees were falling. Others, again, brought these down as lumber, some bearing burdens, and others placing the rollers on which the heavy masses of wood and stone were brought to their appointed places. The worshippers in the completed Temple probably never saw these men; their names were unknown to them as to us. Their work was like that of the sculptors of those marble figures which adorn the roof of Milan Cathedral, or like that of the carvers of stone-work in the marvellous roof of King's College Chapel, Cambridge—splendid work done by unknown workers.

I believe that much of the best work accomplished for the world, and for the Church, is never seen or heard of at the time. But the Lord is mindful of His own; He remembereth His children. And if He sent His angel to show us where true and lasting service is being done, possibly He would not lead us to magnificent buildings, or to stately worship, or to popular preaching. Perhaps He would draw aside the veil which hides a Christian home, and show us a mother patient with her wayward lad, pleading with

him, praying for him ; seeking by her gentle, watchful love to shape his character to true nobility, that she may present him at last as one of God's polished stones. He might show us a Christian going up the creaking staircase to some wretched attic, where a smile lights up the face of a dying man to whom the visitor speaks of a Saviour who is loving and of a Heaven that is near. In that foul, miserable room rests the foot of the ladder whose top is in Heaven. Or possibly the angel might point us to a writer for the Press, working far into the night, pale and tired, but penning words which will affect the world on the morrow—turning men from the love of war, rebuking iniquity in high places, and preparing the nation to choose the ways of righteousness, liberty, peace, and love.

God's workers are often quiet. Their work is sometimes little suspected and poorly rewarded ; and if our souls are cast down within us, as Elijah's was at the seeming feebleness of God's cause, let us remember that He sees the secret seven thousand faithful ones who have not bowed the knee to Baal. I know the world is not converted yet, but the new heavens and the new earth may be nearer than we think. The gigantic structure of fraud and wrong, which we call Heathenism, is already crumbling into ruin. War is more dreaded and avoided by civilized peoples than in our earlier days ; and as to what is coming we have hope. Our Colonies and America

are the germs of the world's future ; and if only those nascent nationalities are saturated with love to God and to man, a kingdom will come at last which the world has never seen yet ; a kingdom in which taxation shall not crush the spirit of the people, and every man shall have his right of a fair day's wage for a fair day's work ; a kingdom from which revolting immoralities now flaunting themselves in the glaring light shall be cast into outer darkness ; a kingdom in which standing armies shall no more drain the people's life-blood, nor hideous war make fair lands heavy with the harvest of the dead ; a kingdom in which truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yes, that day will come in God's good time—though it cometh not with observation. As our Lord said, it is like the leaven slowly permeating the meal, or like the seed silently forcing its way through the soil. Or, to use the figure in our text, the master Builder is silently carrying on His work of building the Heavenly Temple. And there is neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it is in building.

## II.—THE BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE ARE DOING VARIED WORK.

Had we been in Jerusalem, we should have noticed great differences between the kinds of work done. Some was arduous and mechanical, and some was



very pleasant, giving opportunity for the exercise of artistic taste. Some was dignified and some was undignified. Still every kind of work had its place. None could be neglected. The toil of the poor clay-moulder was as necessary as the skill of the clever designer.)

(It would be an onerous task even to mention all the forms of Christian activity. Suffice it to say that something can be done by every man, woman and child for the establishment of Christ's Kingdom. Nor ought we to disregard such service as is quite outside the organization of the Church. For example, as Christian citizens we should take our share of responsibility, and, if need be, of reproach, in the defence of the liberties of the people, and in the furtherance of all legislation which will put down the prevalence of vice and wrong. ]

In professional and in business life each one can do a great deal towards destroying or upholding the kingdom of righteousness and truth; and the man who, because he is a Christian, will not make an unjust gain, or do a doubtful action, preaches more effectively than any pulpit orator can do. Let us rejoice that we are not all alike either in our capacities or in our opportunities, and that Jesus Christ has room for us all in His Kingdom. There is room for the man who can speak so as to compel others to listen to words of truth and soberness; and room for

the timid, shrinking girl, whose pure and gentle life fills her home with fragrance. There is room for the remonstrance of the serious man, and room for the laughter and fun of children whose merriment does good to the tired heart, like medicine. There is room for the thoughtful student, who goes out to meet those theories which, Goliath-like, defy the armies of the living God, and who is keen to see the one vulnerable point in the armour; and room for him also who knows and cares nothing for speculations and doubts, but who, by his prayers, lifts us all higher in purpose and in life, till we stand consciously in the presence-chamber of the King. Then, since there is room for us all, and a call for us all, let us, brethren, with true humility, with ready self-abnegation, with cordial good-will towards others, and with sincere prayerfulness, undertake some kind of service. And if we have to stoop, or to go whither we would not in order to do it, let us remember our Lord, who for our sakes denied Himself, and took up His cross before He ascended His throne. It is He who died for us, who understands us, who is patient and generous towards us, who has given "to every man his work."

III.—THE BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE SHOULD DO THEIR WORK WITH CAREFUL COMPLETENESS.

Looking at the Temple of Solomon, merely from

a builder's standpoint, it must have been a very wonderful work, especially if we consider its gigantic size, its artistic ornamentation, and the comparatively rude machines and tools then in use. So exact were the measurements, and so exquisite the finish of every part, that when all the materials were brought together, they made a complete and perfect whole. Piece joined accurately to piece in the woodwork; and every separate casting of metal fitted its exact place; while the stones in size and fit surpassed any in our modern buildings. Nothing but the most painstaking accuracy in every department could have ensured such a result. Yet it is almost certain that every workman was ignorant of the design; he was only intent upon finishing his own part well.

Every student of nature has noticed the marvellous finish of the Creator's works. The smallest insect that dances in the sunbeam is as perfect as the elephant that crashes through the jungle, or the hippopotamus that wallows in the stream. And not only the works of nature, but the forces and laws of nature (which are all of God) are as perfect in their sphere as they are resistless in their power. For example, when the tide flows in, and you stand upon the shore, you can tell your child with perfect certainty, "this spot will soon be covered, but that point will be left bare even when the tide is at its flood." You are sure of this, because the force and

reach of the tide is measured and exact. And exactitude of law demands on our part exactitude of obedience in all spheres of life. If you violate law, if you take poison into your system, though it be microscopically small as the cholera germ, injury must follow, and perhaps death. Infringement of natural law, however slight, brings retribution; no prayers or vows can save us from it. I know that it is sometimes said, "It is very hard that such serious results should follow on small disobediences"; but the fact is indisputable, and it is written everywhere, and not in Scripture only, that carelessness will not be tolerated by Divine law. Some one here secretly says, "I have done no great harm. It is true that I have no great knowledge of God in Christ, and do not care to have it; and it is also true that I have not turned from some sins, and do not mean to turn; but it is very hard that I should be lost because of that." Yet you will be, if God's word be true; and if the law of the spiritual world be analogous in certainty to the law of the natural world. Hence it is we are asked, "How shall we escape" (not if we repudiate and reject so great salvation but) "if we neglect so great salvation?"

Brethren, let me urge you to self-examination and to earnest prayer, that you may lay aright the foundation of your heavenly hopes, that when the winds of judgment and the storms of death blow

and beat upon them they shall stand, because they are founded upon a rock.

And remember that not only in choosing the foundation do you need care and prayer, but in building upon it. It is not enough to please your fellows in Christian work; but you should labour with serious anxiety to approve yourselves to God. Let every man take heed how he buildeth "there-upon, for the day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

IV.—THE BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE SHOULD BE MORE ANXIOUS TO DO THEIR WORK WELL THAN TO BE NOTICED IN DOING IT.

The people of Jerusalem heard no sound of axe or of hammer while the Temple was building. No noise aroused the attention of passers-by; but every one who looked could see the effect of quiet, faithful labour carried on each day.

Brethren, we need quiet. Some of us wish, for the sake of our own spiritual life, that we could more often get it. Gladly would we sometimes obey the call of Jesus, "Come ye yourselves apart into the desert and rest awhile"; for if we could speak to God more often, we should speak about Him more effectively.

There are busy teachers, careworn mothers, active, bustling men, who need to be alone with

God ; and a season of quiet, if rightly used, may be as much a means of grace to them as Sabbath worship. Moses saw the vision of God in the wilderness when he had turned his back on the civilization of Egypt ; and Elijah heard the still small voice when the crowds on Carmel had scattered and left him alone. It is when God works in us to will and do of His good pleasure that we are best prepared for effective service ; and it is that personal spiritual preparation which is most wanted. The great organization may break down ; the applauding multitudes may be silent ; but God's work will steadily go on, for whispered counsels, holy influences, intercessory prayers, will still be enriching the world. Brethren, let us believe more in the power of personal consecration. In all the ages of Christendom, since the days when Paul evangelized the world, it has been the individual worker giving himself wholly to God, and not the tribe, or the nation, or the church, which has successfully carried out God's purposes. Think of St. Patrick, who, in spite of all the legendary stories associated with his name, was a saintlike and successful missionary of the cross. Almost alone he stepped upon the shores of Pagan Ireland, resolved to win that country for his Lord and with God's help he won it. For sixty weary years he fought bravely with the old false gods of heathenism, and broke their power for centuries. And when he died and gave—

“ His body to that pleasant country’s earth,  
And his pure soul unto his Captain, Christ,  
Under whose colours he had fought so long,”

Ireland was more Christian than England is to-day. His disciples carried the Cross triumphantly to the Scottish Highlands; to the lonely German pine forests; to the savage Gallic settlements; to Britain and the wild islands of the Northern seas; and so deep was the mark left on Europe, through the agency of his converts, that no less than one hundred and fifty-five Irish Saints are venerated still in Germany alone. Granted that there were superstitions and errors in his teaching (though these were fewer than some imagine), still there was an enthusiasm and a willingness to do steady, hard, and at first obscure work, which may well put the modern Church to shame. Let us pray for the raising up of such men in our day, and that even we may be amongst them, being uplifted by the power of God’s Holy Spirit, and strengthened with His might, that we may have joy in the last day, when the top stone of God’s Temple is “brought forth with shoutings of Grace, grace, unto it.”

V.—THE BUILDERS OF GOD’S HOUSE WILL SEE THEIR LABOUR ISSUE IN THE ATTAINMENT OF THE DIVINE IDEAL.

The work of Solomon’s builders, however widely distributed, however secretly done, was all tending

towards an appointed end—the completion of a Temple, in which God would be worshipped, and where He would reveal Himself. That building existed in the mind of the master Builder before it had an actual existence ; for an architect not only draws plans, but makes a specification, and perhaps takes out his quantities ; so that he thinks through the whole work and knows its minutest details. It is so with the Great Architect, the Originator and Upholder of all things. The Divine purpose is controlling our activities, is appointing to each of us his responsibilities, and God will at last bring out of what appear to be confused and contradictory events, “the new heavens and the new earth, in which righteousness will dwell.” We read in the Book of Genesis of a time of chaos, when “the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” But there was hope—indeed there was certainty—of the emerging of a beautiful world. Because the Spirit of God was brooding over the face of the deep, light sprang up in the darkness ; Divine order superseded confusion ; and Paradise gleamed where chaos had reigned.

Then God worked without human intervention, but now He works through it ; yet as truly as before the work is His, and He has pledged Himself to its accomplishment, and has given to men and angels the highest possible proof of His earnestness. He has sent His only begotten Son—whose sacrifice is



the means of the consecration of the Temple—by whom and in whom all the needed materials are ours.

By His wise and gracious teaching Christ gave us truth ; by His stainless life He brought us holiness ; through His death He proffered us pardon ; by His resurrection He gave us life, and by His ascension He enriched us with hope. Resting on His finished work, we His believing people are the Temple of the Lord, a Temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. How is it with you? Have you, by believing on Him, found your place in the living Temple, as one of the living stones? Remember that, like the building we have thought of to-day, this also is built of stones “made ready before they are brought thither” ; drawn out of the pit of sin, shaped by the hands of mercy, and placed in their true positions by the power of the Lord.

“ O one, O only mansion,  
O Paradise of joy,  
Where tears are ever banished,  
And joys have no alloy !  
Thine ageless walls are radiant  
With precious stones unpriced,  
The saints build up the fabric,  
The corner-stone is Christ.”



THE HIDDEN GOD

“Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the  
Saviour.”—*Isa.* xlv. 15.

## XII

### THE HIDDEN GOD

THIS is the exclamation of a prophet who foresaw unexpected issues springing from a future event. It was revealed to him that when darkness was thickest light would burst forth ; that Israel's hour of deepest despondency would be the birthtime of its spiritual re-creation. As this truth flashed across his mind, in the moment of inspiration, he exclaimed, "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

This verse embodies a general truth, which we shall do well to ponder—that our God is one who hides Himself, working under the surface of things, as it were, so that He needs to be discovered, and can only be discerned by the spiritually-minded. Let us consider some exemplifications of this—I. In Nature ; II. In History ; III. In Providence and in our own inward experience ; and then learn from it what with God's blessing we may.

I.—It is obviously true that IN ALL THE PHENO-

MENA OF NATURE God, whom we adore as the Creator and Sustainer of all things, is one who hideth Himself. How else can you account for the fact that the closest investigation of these affords no glimpse of Him ; that no man, by mere searching, ever did find out the Almighty ?

We invent a microphone, and listen to sounds which human ear has never heard before—so slight are they ; but we never catch a whisper of God's voice. We sink our dredges to the bottom of the deepest seas, and bring up specimens of life from depths where once it was supposed life could not be ; but we get no evidence thence that God exists, such as would convince an unspiritual man. We search the heavens, and find worlds on worlds, systems on systems of worlds ; we learn the nature of our sun, and search the crevasses of the dead moon, and weigh the planets which circle round our sun, yet some who can do all these things know less of God than did the simple shepherd boy who sang in the fields of Bethlehem, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." Men may study God's works—may analyse, dissect, and expound them ; but yet, from all who are undevotional, He hides Himself. "God is a Spirit," and spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

I suppose that if a mighty hand were stretched out of heaven, and if it were plunged into the sea, gather-

ing together from its bottom the soil from which a new island was instantaneously made, some would acknowledge the supernatural; but the Creator works differently. He is content that in the changes of the world there should be nothing so startling as to force recognition of Him. When Brooke's deep-sea sounding apparatus brought up dredgings from a depth of over two miles, Professor Bailey found them filled with diatoms now, I believe, assigned to the vegetable world, and with shells so tiny that only a microscope could reveal them. The little marine insects built their habitations, and the diatomaceæ lived their lives, as if to fill up vast chasms at the bottom of the ocean and to build up the solid earth. The great chalk cliffs are the product of the former; while the latter, though equally small—thousands of millions of them going to form a square inch—make strata on which cities rest. Together these tiny things do more than higher creatures for the earth we live on, forming, as they do, the clay beds of our rivers, and giving the ingredients of our fertile fields. That is how God creates and renews the face of the earth. Behind these little creatures He hides Himself. Indeed, a similar process goes on all the world over. Influences which appear as transient as the phosphorescent light on the sea are not really so; they reappear in other forms and places. The little things which are forgotten are not destroyed, but they accumulate and gather power, until the weak

things of the world confound the mighty. As the foraminiferæ and diatomaceæ do what a tempest cannot, so accumulated words of wisdom and deeds of love effect a change which a noisy revolution cannot accomplish.

In the development of plants and animals, the same law is seen ; indeed, many have lost belief in God, because in the processes which He instituted and ordained they cannot see Him. They forget that there is a sphere in which the efforts of mere intellect are as ineffective as the prying of the physical sight ; that no man can by searching find out God ; and that He intended this when, though a God of Israel and a Saviour, He hid Himself.

As it has been with the creation and development of life, so it is with its sustenance. It would have been possible for God to open His hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing, in such a way that He would have unmistakably revealed Himself. But He does not rain down manna from heaven. He endues the soil with fertility, and gives to the seed life in itself, and fits man for his work so that he can go forth to his labour in the fields, and then lets the result be a harvest—thus answering the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." Behind what we call natural processes and human efforts He hides Himself. Even the lower creatures are fed so. The owls and ravens and nuthatches hide their superfluous food, and the spider holds another captive in



her web, though for the present she has eaten her fill, and the shrike spits beetles on the thorns as a reserve for a future meal ; and in all these we see a foresight and instinct which fairly amaze us ; but behind the instinct God hides Himself.

But when we know God, in Jesus Christ—when in our inward spiritual experience we are certain that He is, and that He is near—then all these are signs and proofs to us of our Heavenly Father's wisdom. Seek God in Nature, while you shut your eyes to the Only-begotten who hath revealed Him, and you will seek Him in vain ; but know Him and adore Him in Christ, and you will rejoice in all Nature as His handiwork, and see, in what appears at first sight ordinary, most wonderful proofs of His prevision. I was reading the other day of the extraordinary adaptation of man for the earth, and of the earth for man. To some of you it might seem of no great consequence whether our globe were a little larger or a little smaller than it is, especially as men lived many centuries upon it without knowing its size ; but the fact is, that a change would be fatal. There is a necessary proportion between the size and weight of the earth and the strength God has given to your limbs and muscles. If, for example, you were conveyed to the moon, you would weigh five times less than you do here, and would be so unsteady that a child's touch would overthrow you. If you were carried to the planet Jupiter—all other

things remaining the same—you would feel crushed down under a burden eleven times heavier than yourselves; you could not walk nor stand—you could scarcely move. “The work of the Lord is perfect” in its adaptation, and yet those who know all this far better than I do prove sometimes in their own experience that God is one who in these things effectually hides Himself.

II.—Turning from this interesting subject—which many of you can illustrate far more fully for yourselves—let me remind you of the truth of this statement as EVIDENCED IN HISTORY. It is to this Isaiah specially refers. We could not do better than glance at Cyrus as one example of what he meant; for to him the allusion is very pointed and definite.

There were remarkable interpositions of Providence in the personal history of this great prince. No doubt we must allow for some exaggerations in the account given of him by Xenophon, in whose time Cyrus was regarded as the typical Eastern hero; but the main facts of his eventful history are certain and startling enough. His father was Cambyses, a Persian nobleman, and his mother Mandane, a daughter of Astyages, the last king of Media; and this superstitious, cruel grandfather gave orders for the murder of the infant child. But, unknown to him, his orders were disobeyed, and the child was hidden for years, brought up in obscurity under an

assumed name, until in youth his imperious disposition and lordly demeanour revealed him to himself and others. He grew to manhood, and then led a successful revolt against the tyrant, and, after establishing himself on the throne, he won a succession of victories over surrounding kings. This is one of the marvels of history, for he soon gained undisputable sovereignty over the greater part of the known world. Familiar as he became with these prophecies, and with the remarkable events in his own life which coincided with them, he could not remain uninfluenced. Indeed, we know that he did not fail to recognise Jehovah as one who had secretly controlled his destiny and appointed him his work. Hence he issued that remarkable proclamation which is recorded in Ezra i. 2, which begins: "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah."

Now, I want you to see how widely the world's destinies, political and religious, were affected by this turning of the mind of Cyrus in the right direction. That great king's advent was an epoch in universal history. The fall of Sardis and Babylon was the real starting-point of European life. The rise of Greek art and philosophy, and the foundation of the Roman constitution, synchronise with the triumph—in Cyrus—of the Arian race in the East. The character of the man who gave the turn to history, who was the

pointsman turning dominion off from the old lines on to the new, was of importance to the whole human race ; and behind him, in him, through him, God was working ; though we may well say, " Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

I know that to a cursory reader the return of a few exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem appears to be a small matter ; and such a one is apt to think that Isaiah, being a patriot poet, exaggerated its importance. No doubt it would attract the special attention of a Jew—the more so, because for the first time in their history they met in Cyrus with a heathen prince who was neither a cruel oppressor nor yet a seductive ally, but a generous liberator and a just guardian of their rights. He would be properly recognised and extolled by the Jews as a shepherd of the Lord, and as His anointed one. But besides this, his generosity to them was important in itself. More than his victories and administrative arrangement, this act has lived and become fruitful in history. The noble buildings which adorned the vast cities he ruled have scarce one stone left upon another ; the literature, laws, and religion of the great Persian Empire have disappeared, leaving hardly a trace behind ; but his restoration of the Jews, which prepared them to fulfil God's purpose—the coming of the world's Saviour—lives and works mightily among men still. It was not merely that

the restoration gave them a local habitation and a name once more ; it vitally affected their thoughts. Having lost their temporal sovereignty, and being dependent upon Persia, national exclusiveness was weakened, and some of them became prepared, as the apostles of Christ, to be the pioneers of a kingdom world-wide and spiritual. Their Scriptures were collected, their prophetic work came to an end, their idolatry was dead and buried, never to rise again, and they were ready for a Messiah who should be the Saviour of the world. In this event, therefore, which seemed so small, God Himself was hidden, and through it His eternal purpose of love was fulfilled. " Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

It would be interesting to trace, in similar fashion, other events, trifling in themselves, but all-important in result. Think, for example, of Israel's exile in Egypt, and restoration to Canaan, naturally brought about, yet great in issues. Think of the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem, unnoticed by short-sighted men, but gloried over by far-seeing angels. Think of the cross of Calvary, which to passers-by from Jerusalem was only one execution among many, but which has proved ever since the glory of the Church and the hope of the world. Call to mind the spread of the exquisite and flexible Greek language, the construction of the noble Roman roads, and the prevalence of universal peace just

at the time when these were needed by Christ's apostles to proclaim a new Gospel, for which the world was yearning. Unconscious instruments have been often used by a hidden God ; and to many a self-sufficient conqueror and profound thinker He has whispered, " I have girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." Remember, brethren, that the same God works in more modern days. Study for yourselves, *e.g.*, the great Methodist revival of last century, which had more effect on the character of the English people than any political revolution. It was a time when Secker was deploring the demoralization of England as threatening to "become absolutely fatal"; when Watts declared that "religion was dying in the world;" when Butler wrote, "it has come to be taken for granted that Christianity is no longer a subject of inquiry, but at length is discovered to be fictitious"; when the Anglican Church had become "an ecclesiastical system under which the people of England had lapsed into heathenism," and Nonconformity was "rapidly in course to be found nowhere but in books"; and, meanwhile, across the Channel, rationalistic infidelity was invading the strongholds of the Reformation, and the French philosophers were spreading moral contagion through Europe. In point of fact, faith was dying, and only here and there the whispered prayer went up, "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work." And God did work—mightily, victoriously; but how? He touched the

heart of a lad born in a Bristol inn, who was struggling for his education as a servitor in Oxford. He set him seeking in an agony for a purer faith than he found around him, lying prostrate—he tells us himself—on the ground for whole days in silent or vocal prayer. Thus secretly prepared by a God who was hiding Himself, George Whitfield began to preach, and startled all England and the American colonies from Maine to Georgia. At the same time, in Epworth Rectory, a noble God-fearing matron had been training her two boys, by prayer and by character, the one to become the founder of Methodism, and the other its Psalmist. Under Whitfield and the Wesleys, religion revived, England was saved. But about the means employed we can only say, “Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.”

III.—The same God is caring for His Church still. He may be preparing now for a change even greater than that, which within the lifetime of some of us may bring about a new heaven and a new earth; and we need it.

Meantime, let us not forget that it is the Providence of this God of whom we have spoken which encircles each one of us. It is through the seemingly ordinary and natural events, most often, that He is affecting you; but if you set yourself against His purpose—if you love and follow the things which He hates and would save you from—you need to hearken

to the warning in the 9th verse : "Woe to Him that striveth with his Maker." Submit yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you in due time. Give yourself up to Him, in one act of complete self-consecration, to be what He wishes, to do what He ordains, and in that act you will find your peace and your heaven.

Do not be despondent, fellow-believer, if you cannot see a good and wise God in every event which happens to you. Though He is the "God of Israel," who listens to prayer ; though He is "the Saviour," who means to deliver you from all evil ; yet he is a God who hideth Himself. Even Job, amidst his calamities, was unable always to recognise Him. You remember his plaint, "Behold, I go forward [towards the rising sun], but He is not there ; and backward, but [amid the glories of sunset] I cannot perceive Him. . On the left hand [in the region of gloom and cold] where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him. He hideth Himself on the right hand [the unexplored regions of the south] that I cannot see him. But He knoweth the way that I take. When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Yes, there is the comfort—though He is hidden from us, we are sure that we are not hidden from Him, and He is guiding us, even when we do not know Him.

Think of what He has done for you already. You were born into a home where love and kindness



surrounded you from the first. You have received in moral heritage and in Christian culture what, if you are faithful, will fit you for a noble service. The education given you at school, which was not the result of your forethought or effort, has girded you with strength. The occupation of your life was provided for you in a way you did not anticipate. God means something by all this. He has a purpose for you, which to lose will be an eternal loss ; and it is a purpose of love. To be His, and to live for Him, will be the fulfilment of your true destiny ; for it is " the chief end of man to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." But there will be no overpowering of your will, for that would be the destruction of your real dignity and would transform you from a man into a thing. God asks for your willing service, and if you withhold that He will cast you out as an unprofitable servant. Yield yourselves to-day, I beseech you, to Him who can say to you, even in your time of thoughtlessness and prayerlessness, " I have girded thee, though thou hast not known Me."

We all know something of the hiding of God in the events which come to us. We wish we could see Him always, but we cannot ; and much of our journey is a walking in the dark, where we can do nothing but trust the unseen Friend. Sometimes, I fear, we hide Him from ourselves. Worldliness environs us like a dense fog, through which we cannot perceive Him, and perhaps do not care to do so. Doubts fostered

till they spread over our whole horizon like earthborn clouds hide Him. Indulged sin covers our eyes and blinds our spiritual vision ; and some love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. May God sweep all these away, and answer the oft-repeated prayer,—

“ Oh, let no earthborn cloud arise  
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes.”

It is not such hiding as this, however, that our text refers to, but that which is characteristic of His dealings with us when He means us to walk by faith and not by sight. He stands in the shadow of your troubles, to see that they purge you without destroying you. He leads you into your Gethsemane, where, being in an agony, you pray more earnestly ; but there is no Gethsemane without its angel. And in the approach of death we believe that He stands behind the seeming enemy ; for in so terrible a form He sometimes fulfils the promise, “ I will come again and receive you to Myself.” Then, when the shadow feared of man vanishes, and we see the face of Him who has loved us all along, we shall say with grateful, glad surprise, “ Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.” May He, in His mercy—

“ Bring us where no clouds conceal  
The brightness of His face.”

HEAVEN'S TEACHING ON EARTH'S  
DUTIES

“ See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.”—*Heb.* viii. 5 (part).

### XIII

## HEAVEN'S TEACHING ON EARTH'S DUTIES

THE experience of Moses on Mount Sinai, to which our text refers, was a remarkable example of communion between God and man. We may thankfully accept it as a symbol of spiritual truth, and typical of recurring experience. The mountain, rising high above the people on the plain, reminds us of spiritual heights which only they can scale who are devout in aspiration and resolute in seeking after God. And the cloud which crowned Sinai's summit, in which Moses was lost to sight, suggests the mystery ever shrouding the spiritual communion experienced by God's elect, which is unperceived by outsiders. Indeed, the more we consider that narrative the more we see how abundantly Paul was justified in speaking of Sinai as an "allegory," teaching spiritual truths to all ages. Fellowship with God is not peculiar to any age, or clime, or race; and access to the Father is now far more generally enjoyed than

in Mosaic times ; for since then the world has seen and heard Him who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Jesus Christ reveals the Divine Fatherhood: in Him God draws near to us, and in Him man draws near to God, appearing as He does in heaven itself, as the representative of redeemed humanity, the first-born among many brethren. Thus is fulfilled His own prophecy, founded on the dream of the patriarch: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Spiritual communion, I say, is not less real than it was, but more real, more natural, and more general than in the times to which our text refers. There are those among us whose religious life is more hidden from their nearest relations than was Moses from the people when the cloud enveloped him; and they can testify from happy experience that God's heart is more responsive, and His angels are far more close, than those encased in materialism suppose. The flash of thought between God and man is more swift and subtle than the intercourse between man and his fellows, perfected though this has been by modern science; and our line of communication is more safe than any on earth, though covered by the deepest sea. This communion had its highest development in Jesus Christ, who spoke to the Father, and for the Father, so habitually, that He was consciously one

with Him. Hence He said, "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works"; "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." Well may we pray,—

"O Thou, by whom we come to God,  
The life, the truth, the way;  
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod,  
Lord, teach us how to pray."

I have already hinted that there is much about communion with God—such as is here exemplified—which we cannot explain, and cannot even understand. I am not one of those who are impatient to have all religious experiences, and spiritual phenomena, verbally defined, for I feel sure God never meant all these to be brought within the four corners of any metaphysical theory. Indeed, even in the lower sphere of human affection, I can enjoy loving and being loved, without being anxious for the discovery of the special nerve-cells concerned in the process. I am glad that there is a good deal beyond explanation still; much to maintain feelings of awe and reverence in all right-minded men; many things which await revelation in another and higher condition than the earthly, about which Jesus said, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." In the world of nature I rejoice to see and know what the sunlight reveals; but the world is all the more beautiful, because the very light which reveals things casts its shadows also. Similarly, we

rejoice in the light which crowned Sinai ; but we do not resent the cloud which hid what happened there from the gaze of the curious and unprepared. We need not, therefore, trouble ourselves much about the mode of the Divine revelation to Moses, respecting which the mandate came again and again : " See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

The truth is, that God has manifold ways of making His will known to those who are eager to discover it ; and this is not to be wondered at, for, imprisoned though we are in a mortal body, we can convey thoughts to each other by many and divers means. It does not seem to me at all incredible (though the idea is confronted by general scepticism) that one mind may influence another even without the intervention of the body. It certainly will do so hereafter, and there are premonitions of it here. But be that as it may, surely the Father of our spirits can do this. The working of His Spirit on ours is not a theological figment ; it is a psychological truth, an experienced certainty. Indeed, if only our spiritual sensitiveness were quickened, instead of being dulled by animalism, or perverted by worldliness, fellowship with God would be our constant enjoyment. It is the sin-stained soul which, like the first man, is " afraid " to hear the voice of the Lord. The simple, childlike, innocent soul dares to answer, " Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," and to such the message comes.



Have none of you this spiritual sense of hearing undeveloped, because of your own wilfulness and carelessness? Have you not latent within you a faculty which may yet become "the evidence of things not seen"? As physical senses are developed, so, under the blessing of the same God, spiritual senses may be. I remember receiving a call, some years ago, from a man whom I had not seen since boyhood. He came to me blind and helpless; but I could recall him as a self-reliant, bright young fellow, likely to make his way in the world. Sitting in my study, he produced a book, and with rapid finger he ran over the raised letters, reading sentence after sentence; his exquisite sense of touch conveying the thoughts to his mind. When I had seen him years before he had no such gift, his fingers were no more sensitive than mine; but in the interval a new sense had developed. There are not wanting those who have had a similar experience in spiritual life; for a new channel has been opened, through which God's truth flows. More to them than even the reading of Scripture is the whispered teaching of the Spirit of God; and when prayer is intense and delightful, when the soul is lifted up into a loftier and serener atmosphere than is common, knowledge of what God would have us do, and be, is certain; but we must listen obediently, for He says, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

This verse reminds us

I.—THAT NOTHING IS TOO TRIVIAL FOR GOD TO NOTICE. Moses was instructed in the mountain about the making of bowls, and dishes, and spoons, and staves, and tables. Trifling details, which we might have imagined could easily have been left to the taste of Bezaleel, are not only mentioned once, but again and again, with what seems wearisome iteration. And if this fact suggests no other truth, at least it may remind us that the God of Jews and Christians is essentially unlike the God imagined by Epicureans—ancient and modern ; for there is nothing too insignificant to be cared for by Him.

Human knowledge, especially of late years, has been going in the direction of the trivial. Most of the great discoveries made during the century have been preceded by keen analytical research, such as that which has recently revealed another element in the atmosphere (argon) which has successfully hidden itself till now. Once the ablest minds occupied themselves chiefly with gigantic enterprises, the movements of armies, and the establishment of empires. Now the trivial is investigated, and we see something of the vast issues which flow from what was obscure. To-day we know that a martyrdom of pain may result from one disordered nerve, and that fatal disease arises not from what is great, but from what is microscopic. The history of science frequently shows that knowledge of truth comes to those who, like their Creator, do not overlook the trivial, even though it be but the

fall of an apple. A remarkable and well-known example of this occurred in 1848, when a new planet was discovered. Professor Adams had noticed a slight disturbance in the movement of the planet Uranus, which seemed a deviation from law. He set to work to account for this, and soon his mathematical knowledge compelled him to conclude that there was another planet whose attraction affected it; and he announced to the world, "This unseen planet must exist, and ought to be found at such a given time, in such a place." Sure enough it was there! His faith in physical law should be ours in respect to spiritual law: and in spite of all that seems abnormal in what we call at present "the supernatural," we may be sure that there are no anomalies in God's universe; but all mysteries will be explained by the coming revelation of higher law. The observation of a trifle, remember, led to the discovery of a world.

But I need not seek further to justify my statement that God is interested in trifles. Why, it was exemplified by the advent of the everlasting Son of the Father; for our earth, as compared with millions of created worlds, is as a drop in the ocean of existence, or as a single leaf in the infinite forest of being. Yet He came for the conquest and putting away of sin. And while He was on earth, what small things He cared for! He who spoke with angels, noticed children playing in the market-place. He who could give bread from heaven to eat, was sorry

for the poor who were hungry. He who knew, as no one else could know, the infinite riches of God, could speak with praise of the two mites cast into His treasury by a widow. The revelation of God, both in the Old Testament and in the Eternal Word Himself, is that of one who notices and cares for what we esteem to be trivial.

Now, if this be so, we ought not to wait, before going to Him for help, until some crushing sorrow comes to break us down. When small anxieties fret us, and little worries in our home-life distress us, we must remember the cheery command, "in *everything* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." The heaviest burdens we have to bear are those made up by the accumulation of trifles, vexations, and disappointments which ruffle our tempers and check our progress because somehow we do not believe, as we should, that even to these the command applies: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." It would be for our happiness if we frankly accepted the truth we sing about in our hymn,—

"There is no sorrow, Lord, too slight  
To bring in prayer to Thee :  
There is no burdening care too light  
To wake Thy sympathy.

Thou, who hast trod the thorny road,  
Wilt share each small distress :  
The love which bore the greater load  
Will not refuse the less."

II.—There is another lesson we ought to learn from the text, namely: THAT WE MAY SPEAK TO GOD ABOUT ORDINARY AFFAIRS IN SEASONS OF HIGHEST COMMUNION. When Moses was on the mountain he received laws which affected the moral and religious condition of a nation, and of the world; for the Decalogue contains the elements of law which form the basis of civilised society. But, besides this, there was much which seemed only remotely connected with religion—details about the tabernacle, social arrangements and municipal work, such as we assign to district councils, to magistrates, to medical men, to builders and to artisans. All these things were spoken of in the sacred moments when Moses was in communion with God. To that great leader there did not seem anything incongruous in this. He certainly had not the idea which some act upon (although they would not avow it as a part of their creed), that a man in the House of God, or at the family altar, is quite a different person, with a different standard of conduct, from what he may be on the Exchange, or in the shop, the office, or the school. Whatever religious teachers may do, or neglect to do now, Moses, and the prophets and apostles after him, boldly applied religious principles to practical questions in political, and business, and home life. He knew that the laws of God from heaven were for men's lives on earth; in order that this world might be made the counterpart of that. Indeed, our religion

is of no great value unless it can stand the wear and tear of life, and unless it does something to make home sweeter, and business more honourable, and our whole national life cleaner and happier ; for, after all, the larger part of life here is spent in mundane affairs. If we are conscious that Christ goes with us, as He went with His disciples, to street, and market-place, and home, we may speak to Him about every anxiety and grief that comes ; we may take to Him the questions which perplex us, though they respect change of residence, or change in employment, the education of our children, or the meeting of our debts. If in all our ways we acknowledge Him, He will "direct our paths." Then the most prosaic life will be happy and musical, and to go back to it will be like the fabled experience of any traveller who plunges into the famous lake in the Black Forest, where, in spite of the rattle of passing traffic, he hears the ringing of fairy joy bells.

III.—Let us glance at another lesson taught by our text, not less important than those we have already considered, namely : THAT EVEN SLIGHT DEVIATIONS FROM DIVINE DIRECTIONS ARE FORBIDDEN. This injunction is specially applied to what we should have considered, and Moses himself was perhaps likely to consider, of little importance. It had reference not to the Decalogue, but to the arrangement, size, and shape of the furniture in the tabernacle. But, if applicable to these, far more so to questions of moral law.

Yet I fear we must acknowledge with shame that even professedly Christian people, in dealing with those outside the Church, have sometimes deliberately set aside the principles they profess ; and the Sermon on the Mount has been condemned as impracticable and absurd. Even heathen people have sometimes proved more faithful to their lower creed. Who that has read it does not remember that famous scene in ancient Athens, when Themistocles proposed the transfer of the leadership of Greece to its citizens. He declared in their great assembly that this could easily be effected, but that his plan required secrecy for its success ; and urged them to appoint one of their number to hear what it was, and report to them on its feasibility. With one voice they chose Aristides the Just, and resolved to abide by his decision. Taking him aside, the shrewd, unscrupulous statesman explained his plan for burning the fleets of the other Greeks then lying unprotected in the harbour. Back came Aristides, and a dead silence fell on the multitude : " Men of Athens," said he, " that which Themistocles proposes I have heard. Nothing can be more advantageous to the commonwealth, but nothing in the world more unfair." At once, on the ground of injustice, the expedient was rejected. How many nations in Christendom would to-day sacrifice self-interest to conscience ?

But it is far more important for us to apply this principle of exact obedience to our own affairs. If

it be true that even slight deviations from Divine directions are forbidden, we must guard ourselves against those forms of sin which we generally condone. If, for example, we are about to take an unfair advantage of another, we ought to recall the words, "Thou shalt not steal," which forbids this. If impurity in thought, reading, or speech threatens to smirch us, let us not forget that, according to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, this is forbidden by the command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Or, if we are about to wound the feelings of another by our bitter words, or to stab his reputation, or to murder his hopes, let us remind ourselves of the Divine law, "Thou shalt not kill." If we would do things after the pattern showed us in the Mount we must see things as Jesus saw them.

IV.—Fourthly, and finally, I ask you to reflect on the lesson—THAT WHAT GOD CALLS US TO DO HAS MORE DEPENDING ON IT THAN WE SUPPOSE. I very much doubt whether the Israelites understood the significance of much which they saw in the Tabernacle and its worship; indeed, it is very questionable whether Moses himself saw it all, or foresaw the full results of obedience to the text. Still, this did not greatly concern him. He was at least sure of this, that if God ordained anything, it could not be trivial or useless, but must have some wise design, and this might be marred if obedience was not exact. Suppose that, instead of believing this, he had argued



thus with himself: "It really cannot be of much consequence where the altars of burnt-offering and sin-offering stand. If only the sacrifices are duly offered, no harm would be done if they and the ark of the covenant changed places." The result would have been that, for generations there would have been an obliteration of the symbolical teaching, which set forth that only a people prepared and purified, whose sins have been forgiven, and whose self-dedication has been made, can draw near with acceptance into the presence of a Holy God.

This reminds us, I say, that God expects of His servants what we, with less right, expect of ours—absolute fidelity and thoroughness in work, even though we do not see the object of it. The consequences of negligence in little things is constantly receiving illustration. The careless passing of an unsound axle, which was supposed to be sound, was the cause of that terrible accident last week; and similarly with the explosion of gas a little while before, which proved fatal to the man who was carrying it. If we could see as the angels do, some of us would be shocked and ashamed to discover our responsibility for the undoing of others. For example, it may be that you honestly believe that you are doing no manner of harm to any one by simply continuing to be a worldly man, outside the Church, and undecided for Christ. But remember that there are children, bound to you by the cords

of love, comrades who rely on you to lead because you are shrewd and capable ; and these and others you may raise Godward, or drag downward, by being what you are, though you say to them never a word about it. If, therefore, you have to-day higher and better thoughts ; if in this sermon, or in your own reading, you hear the voice of God, though only in a faint far whisper, see that you refuse not Him that speaketh. Listen reverently, obediently ; and as you go down from communion with God (although you have been at no great height), remember the words, " See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

On the other hand (for there is a brighter side to it), let us rejoice that little things have great issues on God's side, as well as against Him : for this ought to encourage us who, at the best, can only do a little. Our words may be feeble and often ill-advised ; none of our deeds nor endeavours may deserve the faintest applause ; others may sneer at them, and we ourselves may be ashamed as we recall them ; yet we need not be out of heart, for if we are really trying to serve God, we have to do with One who takes note of little services, and makes great results flow from trivial things. Only let us see to it that, while we are working for Him, He is working in us, and giving us in spiritual communion the heavenly " pattern " to which He wants us, and all our doings, to be conformed.

THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN THE  
CHURCH

“Let your women keep silence in the churches : for it is not permitted unto them to speak.”—I *Cor.* xiv. 34.

## XIV

### THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

IT would be difficult to find a clearer or more forcible prohibition than that. If Paul spoke as an inspired man, and if his words were intended to apply to all ages, and to all peoples, our text settles out of hand the question of the right of women to speak in public Church assemblies. Such a declaration as this cannot be ignored by those who profess to make Scripture their rule of life and doctrine; yet some of the most intelligent and earnest Christians have habitually disregarded it. "The Friends," than whom no men are more devout, no women more modest, have always allowed or claimed for women liberty of prophesying; and the soul of the movement known as the "Salvation Army" is, without question, to be found in its inspired womanhood. And if the test of God's approval of speech be its power of edification, He Himself seems to have set His own seal on a practice which our text appears distinctly to forbid.

Now we ought not to follow blindly the customs

which have obtained in our own or in any other denomination of the Church, although many feel themselves bound by the traditions of their grandfathers, who would pay scant respect to those handed down from the so-called "fathers of the Church." Nor ought we to suffer a practice to grow strong if we have reason to believe that it is opposed to the mind of the Spirit—tolerating or acquiescing in it, while we have all along a secret conviction that it is wrong. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," is this Apostle's counsel. In other words, we are to form intelligent convictions about this or that practice in the Church, and not suffer ourselves through indolence to drift along with the current of popular opinion. During the last quarter of a century women have taken a far more prominent part in public work than formerly, and we are bound to ask ourselves whether or no they are forbidden to speak in the assemblies of the Church. The question narrows itself down to this: Do the Scriptures forbid women to speak? For we are not asking whether they are qualified to speak, nor whether it is comely and expedient that they should do so. I have deliberately chosen for consideration the strongest text I could find in the Bible on this subject, which plainly settled the discussion so far as women in Corinth were concerned, and settles it for us, also, if the deliverance of the Apostle were final, and universal in its application.

No doubt there are those among us who are ready to say: "We take God's Word as our rule, and if we find a precept in it as plain as this we do not wish to go any further. It is not for us to pick and choose or to say, 'This applies now, and that applied then.' We, therefore, would not allow any woman, however gifted, to make her voice heard in mixed assemblies, either in address or in prayer." That attitude is, at least, clear and decided.

But others lightly dismiss this view as being a private opinion of Paul's, which he would have been wiser to keep to himself. They regret that on this occasion, and on several others, he went out of his way to discuss subjects he did not understand. They treat his words as ladies now would treat the opinion of a gentleman on the latest fashion, which, in their judgment, is quite out of his province and beyond the limited range of his masculine imagination.

I confess, at the outset, that I take neither of these views. I believe that the Apostle spoke under the guidance of the Spirit of truth, and, therefore, with a Divine authority which his readers were bound to obey. But while I accept the New Testament as my rule of faith and practice, I can only do so when its meaning is fairly interpreted—in the light which would naturally illumine it in the eyes of those who first read it. And when I focus all the stray beams of that light, and concentrate them on this precept, I do not hesitate to say that as an absolute prohibition

it was transient and local, that it was necessary for that time and place, but is neither necessary nor desirable as the final dictum of Christianity to the world at large, for all generations.

I will now give some reasons for this position.

I. First let me call your attention to the fact that the New Testament does not attempt to regulate procedure for all ages and peoples. It lays down principles, but leaves procedure to be determined by the teaching of Him of whom Jesus said: "He shall abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth."

Our personal relations to God, for example, are dealt with distinctly, decisively, and for all time. The sinfulness of our nature, our need of repentance, the possibility of our pardon through a crucified Saviour, the open way to fellowship with the Father, the glorious hope of heaven—all such truths are as necessary now as they were in the first century, and these are changeless; they belong to the eternal, undying relations between God and His children. But some of the relations of His children to their brothers and sisters are not changeless: their forms of religious organizations and their arrangements for united worship are variable, and these may be fitly determined by the genius of an age and by the habits of a people. There are words of this inspired Apostle which deserve wider application than we often venture to give: "The things which are seen are



temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

In the outward conditions of life there has been change and improvement of every kind. In the natural world at one time hideous reptiles splashed through the soft mud, or slid through the filthy waters, wallowing in morasses over which miasma brooded, which to man would have been a deadly poison. As the marshes became less poisonous those hideous creatures became smaller, until there were no longer found on earth reptiles bulky as elephants, and gigantic bats whose leathery wings spread wide as those of the pelican. The earth grew purer and higher life became possible. Subsequently from men who were savages, with stones for pillows, and caves for homes, civilised men arose, and slowly but surely might became tempered by right, and just laws protected the weak and exalted the oppressed. There has been progress right along the line, and examples of it crowd in upon us.

Now, this law has prevailed in the circumstances of the Church, and of humanity at large. Think, for example, of the change that has taken place in family life. The laws and customs of your home are very different from those which prevailed in any family known to Paul, whether among Greeks, Jews, or Romans. Your eldest son is not the ruler of his younger brothers and sisters, as among the Jews; your wives and daughters are not veiled and ignorant,

as among the Asiatics ; your servants are not slaves, to be bought, or sold, or given away at your pleasure, as among the Romans ; and many other points of distinction may be discovered. Or think of the religious practices of the Apostles themselves, and compare them with your own. Both they and their Lord were recognised as being Jews to the day of their death. They went to the Temple, they worshipped in the synagogues, and when Paul had been over twenty years a Christian minister, he offered up Jewish sacrifices in order to remove the suspicion of heresy, and to prove to all onlookers that he was not living outside the limits of Judaism. Was he on this occasion an example to us ? Are we bound by such precedents ? “No,” you say, “the times have changed ; the principle which those men laid down have worked our deliverance from Judaism, though they had not done so in their day.” Precisely, and thus it was with the subject before us. The principles of Christianity have given woman privileges and liberties which in Ephesus and Corinth she could not enjoy without reproach and moral peril. Amidst so many changes, I know not why woman only should be regarded as eternally fixed in customs—like another Lot’s wife, transformed into a pillar of salt !

Seeing, then, that apostolic teaching and practice did not fix worship and domestic arrangements, there is, at least, a fair presumption that it did not intend

to settle the destiny of all women, as doomed to absolute silence in public Christian assemblies, for ever and ever.

II. But let me ask you to consider another truth, namely, that the condition of women under the old dispensation, and in the early Christian Church, was not one of universal silence. Our text, strictly interpreted and accepted as a Divine fiat, in the Church at Jerusalem, for example, would have bidden defiance to all Jewish preferences and customs. The Jews did not exclude women from all public functions, nor compel them to veil their faces whenever they entered the street; and as to their songs and teachings, the Old Testament rings with them.

Did Jesus Christ lower the position already taken by womanhood? Did He mean that women should take in His Church, and among His people, a more subordinate attitude than that which they had enjoyed under Judasim? Let His own ministry answer the question. He had enemies among the men of His day, but, so far as we know, He never had an enemy among the women. They followed Him, and ministered unto Him of their substance. Joanna, the wife of Chuza; Susanna, the lily, as the name implies; Mary, the wife of Alphæus, whose sons were James and Joses; Salome, the wife of Zebedee, the mother of James and John the beloved; Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of our Lord; Martha and Mary of Bethany. Truly a noble band of heroic

souls, forerunners of those who, in all subsequent ages, have witnessed to their Lord and Saviour. In His condescension He received from these acts of kindness like those which led the poet to sing of woman,—

“ Blessing she is, God made her so,  
And deeds of week-day holiness  
Fall from her noiseless as the snow;  
Nor hath she ever chanced to know  
That aught were easier than to bless.”

Further, what do we read in the initial chapter of Church history? Every child knows that after the Lord's ascension to heaven the disciples met together in an upper room, and “they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of our Lord, and with His brethren.” Was that a mistake? Was it a Jewish custom hereafter to be set aside? If so, the discriminating power of the Holy Spirit would reveal it. But what occurred at Pentecost? “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” *All* of them—men and women too. And Peter, who had the keys of the kingdom, who was specially called to the direction of affairs in this crisis, did not rebuke or silence the women; but declared it was a fulfilment of the words: “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . . and on My

servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit, and they shall prophesy." That is, they shall teach and preach, because they are inspired ; and accordingly, the daughters of Philip the Evangelist, and, doubtless, of many another earnest Christian, were known as teachers in the Church.

It may be demonstrated that there is nothing in the Gospels, or the Acts, or in any Epistle addressed to Jewish Churches, which puts the smallest restriction on the rights and liberties of Christian womanhood. But how about our text? That is explicit enough, at all events.

III. This brings me to my third observation, namely, that there were good reasons for making this precept a distinct and definite rule in the Christian churches which were found in Greek cities.

You may compare with this one other passage, which is equally emphatic, in the first epistle to Timothy ii. 12, where Paul says : "I suffer not a woman to teach." That declaration was for the Church in Ephesus, this for the Church in Corinth, and the same social conditions obtained in both. The majority of the members were Greeks, and those who were Jews were as much imbued with the customs of the Greek community as a Jew born in Houndsditch is affected by the fact that he is also a Londoner. In all cities of that type woman was degraded, as she still is generally among Orientals. She was literally her husband's slave, whose recog-

nised duty it was to keep hidden from the gaze of all other men, and to regard herself simply as a domestic drudge. When her husband came home she dared not run to the door to welcome him ; when compelled to go into the street she was obliged to veil up to her eyes, and if she went unveiled, nay, if she learned music and poetry, she lost at once her reputation for virtue. These facts are notorious to any student familiar with the social habits of those corrupt Greek cities. Now imagine in such a city a Christian assembly which (to the amazement of many citizens) women were allowed to attend. Imagine a curious Greek, himself a heathen, strolling into the meeting. He sees a Christian woman, inspired with her new hope in the Saviour—rejoicing in her emancipation—rising from her seat unveiled, and speaking out before both men and women what was in her heart. What would be the effect on a right-minded respectable citizen ? He would probably say to any disciple he knew : “ This is your Christianity. You teach these women to forsake virtuous habits, to disregard common decency, and to behave themselves as only notoriously bad women would think of behaving.” That was what the wise teacher had in his mind. He sharply and decidedly laid down the rule that the women should not teach at all in their public assemblies. He held that their reputation was more valuable to the Church than their testimony, and that they must not do what would discredit the

religion of Jesus Christ through the natural and inevitable misinterpretation of onlookers.

This, then, was a specific command for a degraded community, but we are not, therefore, to regard it as a Divine decision about the position of women in all ages. Christianity, wherever it has been received, has swept away all those degrading customs which made this restriction wise and right. It has inspired woman with powers and hopes, and has taught man to regard her as his equal, not as his slave, and to believe that in her exaltation he is exalted, and through it coming generations will be ennobled.

“The woman’s cause is man’s. They rise or sink  
Together. Dwarfed or godlike, bond or free :  
If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,  
How shall men grow ?”

The age calls for freedom. Christ calls for freedom. In order that development may be natural, wholesome, complete, the growing life must not be cumbered by artificial restraints, whether in man or in woman. “For in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female ; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. iii. 28).

But some one still objects to this interpretation as the setting aside of a distinct command. Let us see whether we do not deal thus with other commands, by conduct which is universally regarded as wise.

IV. There are other laws which, in their strict application, we regard as local and transient.

Take, for example, what this same Apostle says when he forbids women to braid their hair and to wear jewellery. You are not prepared to say that this was out of Paul's province, for you regard him as an inspired teacher. Yet why do you disobey the command? "Because," you say, "times have changed; and what he really assailed was the extravagance and indecency of which some women who went to Christian assemblies were guilty, partly, perhaps, as a rebound against their former seclusion." And no doubt you are right in not literally obeying the command, although you are bound by its spirit to defy fashion when it violates, as it sometimes does, the canons of decency and of moderation. That example will suffice to show that there are other precepts which are not regarded as binding in a literal sense now. The fact is, we must admit that the New Testament writers did not mean to put either men or women for all the future into the condition of early Christians in Greek cities, but intended to alter that condition altogether, and to make the slavery which the Apostles tolerated in Philemon, and the degradation of women which they were compelled to allow for in Corinth, absolute impossibilities. Let us rejoice that God's own Providence has itself made literal obedience to this precept no longer necessary or desirable; that woman is no longer the silent slave,



but the inspired prophetess, whose songs we sing, and whose instruction we may thankfully receive.

V. We hold, then, that inspired womanhood should not be debarred by artificial rules from Christian speech, or song, or prayer. We believe that woman is fit to take such part in the service of God as the result of Christianity itself, which has made many things natural and right which were formerly inexpedient or wrong. We ought to deal with this question as Peter dealt with the admission of Gentiles to the Church. In receiving them he did what was so unusual and heterodox that his brethren were aghast. But Peter argued thus: "The Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us, at the beginning, and, therefore, to reject them would be to fight against God; but we ought to bow our prejudices to God's will." To that appeal all his brethren yielded. There are women who have been called to service as distinctly as the Gentiles were called to fellowship. They are undertaking public work such as would have seemed shocking in Corinth or Ephesus; and their evident fitness and the effects wrought on the hearts of their hearers are the signs of God's approval. We dare not fight against God, nor can any do so with a prospect of success. To put back the hands of the clock does not affect the advance of the sun to the zenith; to shut out the sea from a tiny bay does not keep back the tide; and the tide of Divine life is flowing. In sanctified womanhood, as in sanctified manhood,

progress shall make itself seen till the earth is filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.

VI. It need hardly be said that in the use of such liberty the Church must be guided by sanctified common-sense. There are essential differences which God has created and ordained between the sexes which must prevent perfect similarity in service. Speaking broadly, the public work of life in the Church, and out of it, and, therefore, the general ruling power must and will remain in the hands of man, who is the head of the wife, as Christ is the Head of the Church.

And women differ among themselves very greatly in tastes, in circumstances, and in capacities, which largely indicate the will of God concerning each. A woman's special kingdom is the home, and she is doing her Divinely-ordained work when she frees and fits her husband for his public duties by taking from him burdens he is less able to bear, and when she trains up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. For a wife and mother to neglect these duties in order to enjoy the excitement of a more public life is to sin against her own nature and against her God, and it will be a shameful confession for her to make : " They made me a keeper of vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

But some women have to live an independent life, to earn their own living, to carve out their own

destinies with God's help, and all chivalrous instincts and Christian virtues ought to prevent our hindering in any department of work those who deserve every encouragement and help. Some women have the qualities and graces which fit them for doing more in the Church of Christ than has been generally allowed them, and I say the whole genius of Christianity forbids our using this text as a perpetual barrier against their doing so. Retaining their gentleness and modesty and instinctive delicacy, they will be able to touch hearts which can only be reached by words of sisterly pleading or of motherly love, and the soft, flute-like tones of womanhood shall blend with the trumpet-tones of manhood in ascribing praise and glory to Him, to whom all the riches and all the powers of our redeemed natures belong for ever.



THE POPE'S SUPREMACY : A USURPATION  
AND A PERIL.

“Let no man deceive you by any means : for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition ; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”—*2 Thess. ii.*  
3, 4.

## XV

### THE POPE'S SUPREMACY : A USURPATION AND A PERIL

THIS difficult passage has naturally received different interpretations. It is not my intention this evening to enumerate them. Most of the Reformers applied it, without hesitation, to the Papacy. They declared that in it was to be clearly seen a "falling away" from the pure and simple doctrine of the early Church. They pointed out that the cruelty, the greed, and the falsity of Rome, and the profligacy of her priests, hidden as these were under the cloak of religion, fully deserved the epithet of the apostle, "that man of sin." They inveighed against the ambition and pride of the Pontiff in setting himself above all human law, which justified the description in the eighth verse, "that lawless one." And they further maintained that by proclaiming himself the representative of God and the vicegerent of Christ, and by demanding universal homage and unquestioning obedience, he fulfilled the

words, "He as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

The spirit of the Papacy does not change with time ; indeed, that is one of its loudest boasts. And when we remember that within our own times, with astounding arrogance, the outrageous dogma of "Papal infallibility" has been promulgated, we are ready to admit that the far-seeing Reformers did essential justice to the spirit of this prophecy by giving it that direct application. No free man can visit modern Rome as I have done, and gaze on the kneeling, adoring crowd on the floor of St. Peter's when the Pope is borne aloft on men's shoulders, without a feeling of pain and shame that in these enlightened days a mere man should dare to claim such homage, and that his fellows should degrade themselves so low as to render it. That lowly prostration is but the outward sign of a submission of mind and will to the proud Italian priest which is demanded with as much effrontery as ever.

But while I say this I am not disposed to affirm that the inspired apostle was here prophesying directly and consciously of the Papacy. Rather do I believe that just as there were types of Christ before His incarnation (both in men and in institutions), so there are types of the anti-Christ, which will yet be fully incarnated and revealed, just previous to the second Advent of Christ, who shall finally consume that spirit "with the brightness of



His coming." And I do not hesitate to say that one of the chief of these manifestations of pride and lawlessness, asserting itself in the very temple of God, is to be found in Popery.

In speaking of that pernicious system, I wish to acknowledge frankly, from the first, that men are often far better than the systems in which they find place; and that many good Christian men and women are to be found in that great organisation which has proved itself, as an organisation, a constant foe to the liberty and progress of mankind.

With this admission, which I hope will be remembered throughout, I propose to show that the supremacy of the Pope is a usurpation and a peril. The importance of the dogma can hardly be overrated. It is the tap-root of the gigantic upas tree whose deadly shade has blighted pure and undefiled religion for generations; and if it be once severed in the consciousness of Christendom, the whole system, with its signs and lying wonders, and deceivableness of unrighteousness, will wither. Therefore, although I always prefer to dwell on what all Christians hold as truth, rather than on what some Christians hold in error, I shall endeavour to show that this arrogant claim is non-Scriptural, non-primitive, and non-catholic.

This may seem to some of you a needless task. You say, "This is a Protestant country, and is never likely to be again subject to Papal tyranny; for that

yoke, which our fathers were not able to bear, was cast off generations ago, once and for ever. Therefore, why should we attack an ecclesiastical system, with which we are not concerned, and with which other peoples on the Continent seem fairly content?" Allow me to say that if you are thus confident of England's absolute immunity, you are living in a fool's paradise, and you cannot have noticed, as you might have done, some ominous and recent incidents which point very significantly in the other direction. It is not many years ago since the Pope issued a letter to the people of England urging them to come back to the fold from which they had wandered, and thus to help in bringing about the unity of the Church. The great majority of Englishmen turned a deaf ear to these blandishments, and some of them even suspected a wolf in sheep's clothing. But many of the clergy in the Established Church—who, like the Pope himself, claim descent from the apostles, and aspire to priestly power in pronouncing the absolution of sins, in the administration of sacraments, in receiving confessions, in prayers for the dead, and other Romish practices—were tempted by the offer. Yearning for comprehension in the Romish Church to which if they were honest men they should attach themselves, and hating the Protestantism which they are supposed to believe in, they sent a humble request that the Pope would recognise their Anglican orders as valid, and were hopeful that this might be

done. The question was earnestly considered in Rome, for the issues involved were momentous. If on the one hand, Anglican orders were acknowledged to be valid, there might be an immediate gain of adherents to the Romish Church; if, on the other hand, they were declared to be irregular, the non-Protestant clergy of the Established Church of England might go on with their work of indoctrinating the people with Romanism, until ultimately there might be a still larger ingathering. Which should it be? Well, you know, the reply was a definite declaration that Anglican orders are invalid, that even the clergy who are successfully Romanising their congregations are as much heretical and schismatic as any other wicked Nonconformists, and that any so-called "priest" in the Anglican communion must humbly recant his errors, and be re-ordained, if he would enter, as a priest, the true Catholic Church. In other words, the Pope has once more proclaimed his unique supremacy, and demanded absolute submission. Whether Anglican priests are prepared to sacrifice the prestige and the loaves and fishes of a State Establishment for the honour of serving under the so-called successor of Peter, the fisherman of Galilee, or whether they will continue to receive their livelihood and their position from one Church while doing work for the advancement of another, remains yet to be seen.

But I have said enough already to remind you that

"the supremacy of the Pope" is still a vital question for Englishmen to consider. At the Roman Catholic Convention held a month or two ago, it was agreed to aim more directly at the conversion of Nonconformists, about whose religious tendency flattering things were said, but who, as some of the speakers dolefully declared, have very rarely been won over to Romanism, although from the Episcopal Church perverts are numerous. In meeting this new development of proselytising effort, and in realising that, as the Church of England is no longer a barrier against Romanism, the brunt of the fight in defence of Protestantism must fall on the Free Churches, it will be well that from our pulpits and in our classes more instruction should be given on the errors of Romanism. Of these the supremacy of the Pope is the first I shall deal with.

The nature and extent of the Pope's supremacy is perhaps best stated in the cautious words of Bellarmine, one of its ablest defenders, who was shrewd enough not to put it in its crudest form, but modified it thus :—"By reason of the spiritual power, the Pope at least indirectly hath a supreme power even in temporal matters."

But, however phrased, this supreme authority, even over temporal affairs, has not only been claimed, but exercised, over and over again, as every student of history knows. Henry, King of Navarre, the Emperor Louis IV., and our own Queen Elizabeth

were among those whose subjects were absolved from obedience and loyalty, and even now, as the King of Italy knows, the claim is not modified, although its exercise is, by circumstances over which the Pope has no control. It was this intrusion of a foreign priest into national affairs which chiefly led to the bold and statesmanlike action of Henry VIII. in proclaiming this kingdom independent of the Pope, although, unhappily, his action was marred by his personal character, and by his proclamation of himself as supreme head of the Church—in which none should exercise authority on the ground of secular office, and in which none should be lord save Christ only. In vain does the Divine, yet gentle voice, repeat the words to all His disciples, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you."

Now, this claim to supremacy has, at the present time, less concern directly with national policy than in former ages, simply because the peoples of Europe are sufficiently free and enlightened to repudiate it; but it is still practically exercised in the sphere of faith and morals. As Innocent III. excommunicated brave Stephen Langton for the part he played in securing for us Magna Carta, which is the basis of our civil rights; as Galileo was forced to recant what he knew to be true—that the earth moves round the sun—so in our own day Pope Pius

the Ninth pronounced all that we know as modern liberalism of thought and polity accursed, and he demanded the acceptance by all Christians of those two modern, unscriptural, anti-Christian, and irrational dogmas—"The Immaculate Conception" and "Papal Infallibility." These are to be received on the *ipse dixit* of the Pope because he claims to be God's vicegerent upon earth. This is Papal supremacy brought up to date.

Let us now begin to answer the natural inquiry, "On what is this tremendous claim to Papal supremacy based?" The answer in brief is this. Partly on misquoted and misinterpreted passages of Scripture, partly on traditions which are comparatively late, and altogether untrustworthy and interested, and partly on false donations and forged decretals.

On the last-named I shall say nothing, for we Free Churchmen are not apt to pay regard to decretals and the like, even when they are not forged. And on the utterances of the Fathers we need not dwell long, because we repudiate the notion that men who lived two or three centuries after Christ have therefore special authority, for while they may have had a little oral testimony which we have not, we far surpass them in the accuracy and fulness of our knowledge of Holy Scripture.

Still, it may be well to state for the benefit of those who think more of the Fathers than I do, that for more than two centuries after the Ascension of our

Lord, nothing was ever heard of the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome ; and that for a long while afterwards there was no recognition of it by other bishops. Cardinal Vaughan has more than once quoted with unction and complacency the phrase of Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, *Ubi Petrus ibi ecclesia*—"Where Peter is there is the Church ;" but any reader of that Father's commentary on the forty-sixth Psalm (where this phrase occurs) can see that he did not mean what the Cardinal suggests. Indeed, Ambrose himself distinctly places Paul on terms of perfect equality with Peter ; and he would have been one of the first to repudiate the pretensions of Rome to such supremacy. Tertullian may be set over against him as a still greater authority ; and he says, *Ubi tres ecclesia est, licet laici*—"Where there are three Christians it is a Church, even if they be laymen," and this is in accordance with our belief and practice, and with our Lord's declaration,—“Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” It is the presence of the Lord, not the recognition of the Pope, which makes a Church anywhere.

It is not difficult to understand that proud and ambitious men, as many bishops were, finding themselves in the See of Rome, claimed some precedence on the ground of its being the imperial city ; but even this precedence, which fell far short of Papal supremacy, was fiercely repudiated, especially by the

great African bishops. Indeed, when Gregory VII.—one of the boldest, ablest, and least scrupulous of the Popes—made his arrogant claim, it was condemned as the “novel tradition, schism and heresy of Hildebrand.” And so far were the earlier Popes from making this assumption, that Gregory I., one of the best of them, solemnly said : “Whosoever desires to be called the Universal Priest is the forerunner of Antichrist in his pride.”

The evidence of the early Fathers, then, by no means supports this impudent pretension ; and although that branch of the subject would require a treatise rather than a few sentences, we affirm that for centuries the Fathers of the Church, so far as their words and actions went, resolutely repudiated what they are now declared to have supported.

But, as I said before, the opinions of the Fathers either way have much less weight with us than with some, and we therefore turn now to Scripture.

Around the interior of the dome of St. Peter's you may see painted in colossal letters these words of our Lord—“I say unto thee that thou art Peter (*Πέτρος*) and upon this rock (*πέτρα*) will I build My Church . . . and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” That utterance, say the Papists, gave Peter supremacy over all his brethren, and the Pope, being his legitimate successor, inherits that supremacy.

First let us ask, how are we to interpret those



words? Well, there is a well-known canon of interpretation which will help us, *Scriptura est sensus Scripturæ*—"the Scripture is the meaning of Scripture." In other words, where a sentence is dubious, we are to interpret it in accordance with sentences which are clear. And if there is anything clearly stated in Scripture, it is that Jesus Christ, and not Peter, is the "rock" on which the Church rests, and, as Paul puts it, "other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Christ Jesus." Whether the text we have quoted referred to the declaration which had just before been made by Peter or not, there was certainly nothing in it which gave to him other and more than that which is elsewhere ascribed to the apostles and prophets generally.

Similarly with "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Although Peter so far received the keys that he was the first to unlock the door of the kingdom to the Gentiles, "the power of the keys" was assigned to all the apostles equally with him, a little later in our Lord's ministry, when He promised that they should all have power to bind and to loose, which they did, and which faithful preachers still do when they declare the Gospel.

Further, we absolutely deny that Peter ever claimed or exercised any kind of primacy such as the Pope pretends to. If those words of Jesus had assigned it to him, why did all the brethren dispute afterwards as to which of them was the greatest in the kingdom?

How came it to pass that, when the first synod or council of the Church was called, James, not Peter, was president? What are we to say of the conduct of Paul, who was so far from recognising Peter's authority, that even in Antioch, where Peter was most influential, he withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed? If Peter had such supremacy and infallibility that on the ground of being his successors the Popes should claim these privileges, it is certainly remarkable that in Holy Scripture Peter has more mistakes credited to him than any other apostle. If he was to exercise chief authority among the Gentile Christians, it was strange that not he but Paul was appointed by God to be the great apostle of the Gentiles.

These are only samples of the absurdities and incredibilities which must ever prevent students of the Bible from acknowledging Peter as exercising supremacy among the apostles. No wonder Rome dreads the Bible. About a year ago I stood in that massive and gorgeous cathedral, St. Peter's, in Rome. I found that it was rich in marbles and pillars, but these had not been wrought by Christian hands, but almost without exception had been rifled from Pagan palaces and temples, and I could not help feeling that this was a sign of the fact that there is about the whole Papal system more of the Roman Empire than of the Christian Church. Certainly no man would feel more out of harmony with these gorgeous

surroundings and arrogant pretensions than Simon Peter, the fisherman of Galilee, unless, indeed, it were his Master, Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth.

But if Peter had been given supremacy among his brethren, the Pope would have no right to it, for Peter certainly was never Bishop of Rome, and very probably he never visited Rome. At least there is no proof anywhere in history that he ever did. His work lay chiefly in the East, and found its centre in Antioch. Further, even if he had been Bishop of Rome, there is absolutely no evidence that he either did, or could, bequeath his supposed supremacy to his successors. And if we granted that as a possibility, such privilege would have been long ago forfeited by the errors and crimes of the Popes, for, as Ambrose said, "They have not the inheritance of Peter who have not the faith of Peter."

In this short address I have merely indicated the line of argument fully wrought out by Isaac Barrow and others, who simply demolished and pulverised the basis of this structure of arrogance in the judgment of unprejudiced men.

The Papal tyranny was thrown off generations ago in England by men who found the yoke too heavy to be borne. It is noteworthy that our greatest patriots and noblest men have ever been its fiercest foes, and from their victory we date our liberties and our progress. And if Romish emissaries show themselves in their true colours to be what they ever are and ever

have been, there is no fear of the issue in open conflict. But we must be more carefully on our guard against Anglican priests who are insidiously instilling the dogmas of Rome in schools and churches which some fondly believe are under the control of a Protestant clergy. It would be a serious thing to find after the enemy has been apparently beaten back that their secret allies in our own camp have poisoned our wells.

We Nonconformists are being blamed for fighting against what is called distinctly Church teaching in State-supported schools, but the truth is we are resolved not to provide, at the cost of rates or taxes, a new opportunity for a sacerdotal propaganda among our children, of which priests who hate the Protestant faith are most eager to avail themselves. We must not forget that the error which lies at the root of Papal supremacy lies also at the root of all priestly pretension. It is not true to say that we object to definite religious instruction. There is plenty of it on which all Christians are agreed, which we may surely combine to promulgate, and with which, but for the priests, the English people are content.

Nor is it right to charge us with seeking the abolition of authority, when all we are concerned to do is to show where true authority lies—not in the Pope, nor in the priest, but in Christ Himself, with whom every one of us has directly to do, and who is the only Mediator between us and God. Our complaint

is that His place is usurped, that His Divine person is hidden ; that, to use our forefathers' phrase, " the crown rights of Emmanuel " are infringed. A splendid ritual and a magnificent organisation may once again in history become only a grave in which to hide a dead Christ, guarded by Roman soldiers and sealed with the seal of priests and Pharisees ; but let the Christ of God arise and appear in His saving power among His disciples, the grave opened, the seal broken, and the guards fled, and anti-Christ in every form will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming. The day will yet dawn when He shall appear in power and great glory, but meanwhile He is content to come in the voice of conscience and in the messages of His Word to every man. Still He is represented not by a gorgeous priest, but by any humble and earnest Christian ; coming among men as He did of old when He made Himself of no reputation and took on Him the form of a servant and said, " He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." As Dryden puts it,—

" Your Saviour came not with a gaudy show,  
Nor was His Kingdom of the world below ;  
Patience in want and poverty of mind,  
These marks of Church and Churchmen He designed,  
And living taught, and dying left behind.  
The crown He wore was of the pointed thorn,  
In purple He was crucified, not born :  
They who contend for place and high degree  
Are not His sons, but those of Zebedee."

Finally, let me assure you that if you are humbly loving and trusting the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in the true Church, whether you belong to this organisation or to that, or whether you do not belong to either or to any. John declared, "He that doeth righteousness is born of God." Peter said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him"; and Paul proclaimed this as the true Gospel, even though it be received apart from Priest and Pope and Church, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

“WITHIN THE VEIL”

“ Within the veil.”—*Heb.* vi. 19.



## XVI

### “WITHIN THE VEIL”

“**H** OPE, the anchor of the soul,” is now one of the most familiar phrases in Christian thought and literature. It originated, however, with this inspired writer, and is an evidence of his inspiration: for we do not naturally think of hope as giving steadfastness of life, but rather as giving it impetus. An anchor is the one thing which is fixed and stable about a vessel while it is tossed by each successive wave; and a man, taught by ordinary observation, would hardly speak of hope as an anchor. On the contrary, in human philosophy—whether that of ancient Greece or of modern Europe—prominence is given to hope’s uncertainty and deceitfulness. Apart from Christianity, therefore, poetry would liken it to the gorgeous colours of the sky—beautiful while they last, but fast fading away; or to the dewdrops which make the morning brilliant, though they soon disappear under the heat of the sun; or to the flowers which look lovely for a few days, but then wither in the glare of light, or lie prostrate under a passing storm. The fallaciousness and unreliability of human

hopes are among the commonplaces of worldly thought. If, therefore, a Greek poet had been writing this passage, and had sought to draw an illustration from the equipment of an ancient ship, he would not have likened hope to the anchor, but rather to the sail, for he would have regarded it as a useful, and perhaps a necessary, motive power to urge us forward, but not as a means of fixity. To him, therefore, the phrase, "Which hope we have, as an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast," would have appeared inappropriate and almost absurd. It does not appear so to us, because for centuries European literature has been saturated by Christian ideas. They have completely revolutionised many old theories. For example, the cross to every Roman or Greek was hideous and repulsive, and took in their thoughts a lower place than the gallows does in ours; but, since the crucifixion of our Lord, the cross has been exalted everywhere in poetry and art as the emblem of our faith. Similarly the anchor sure and steadfast, which keeps a vessel safe amid the terrors of storm or the perils of drifting, has become the recognised symbol of our hope, which is sure and steadfast and secures for us serenity and safety.

Christianity (as Wordsworth reminds us in "The Primrose of the Rock") is that which consecrated suffering—

"And turned the thistle of the curse  
To types beneficent."

And it has transformed hope, representing it not as a mere impulse in life, but as the safeguard of life. The reason for this change lies here: according to human philosophy, the invisible is the one region respecting which certainty is not attainable; whereas, according to the Christian revelation, it is the only region of absolute certainty, having about it a durability which makes all visible things appear by contrast passing shadows. Now that Jesus Christ, the representative and forerunner of humanity, has entered the unseen world, and become enthroned in it, the unseen has been made sure to us. A hope fixed in Him has about it a holding power, which exalts it infinitely above all human hopes, for it draws us upward and onward—not for a few days only, as other hopes may do, but right through life, till death rends the veil, and makes us the joyful possessors of more than we ever expected.

From the very nature of things the hope here spoken about is peculiarly helpful and durable, but any hope of what is better than we have is an inspiration and comfort, as we all know from experience. And, mercifully, the help of it is most abundant in our earliest days, when it is most wanted, because then powers are not yet proved, and experience has not yet been gained. Well may Tennyson ask,—

"If nature put not forth her power  
About the opening of the flower,  
What is it that could live an hour?"

Nor is it only in youth that we welcome hope. When you middle-aged men and women have been disheartened by seeming failure, or saddened by unexpected losses, you have been cheered inexpressibly by the coming of "White-handed Hope," that "hovering angel girt with golden wings." For under its inspiration you have braced yourself up to new endeavours, and have gone forward to face the unknown future cheerfully. Nothing is better than to enjoy the sweet companionship of hope, and some have had it right through life. Though one blessing has been given you after another, hope of something further has still filled your heart with expectancy. Hope has been to you something like what you, as a father, may be to your child. You take the child's hand and lead him through leafy lanes where the summer roses peep over the hedgerow and the flowers bespangle the banks. He is tired, but he struggles on manfully because he means to secure the wreath of buds on which he has set his mind. These you gather and give him, but no sooner is that possessed than the sight of another attraction lures him onward and homeward. Thus hope, to some of you, has always been bringing the distant near, and making your life glad by successive gifts. Cowley well says of it,—

"Best apprehender of our joys, which hast  
So long a reach and yet canst hold so fast ;

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Men leave thee by obtaining, and straight flee  
Some other way again to thee ;  
And that's a pleasant country, without doubt,  
To which all soon return that travel out.”

Any hope, if it be fixed on what is real, attainable, and good, is a God-sent angel ; but the hope spoken of here is better than every other, because this angel never leaves our side, nor ever will, even though we pass through the valley of the shadow of death. This is the good hope, through grace—the hope which maketh not ashamed. Instead of leading up to any disappointment it will end in a fruition beyond all conception. May this hope which enters into that which is within the veil, be your inspiration, and comfort to-day and even unto death.

If you look a little more closely now into the verse from which our text is drawn you will notice a mingling of metaphors which is curious, but very beautiful and suggestive. Ebrard gives this concise exposition of it :—“ The writer might have compared the world to a sea, the soul to a ship, the future yet hidden glory to the concealed bottom of the deep, the far off terra-firma stretching away under the water and covered by it. Or he might have compared the present earthly life with the forecourt, and the future blessedness with the heavenly sanctuary, which is concealed from us as by a veil. But he has combined both these. The soul clings, as one in fear of ship-

wreck, to an anchor, and sees not whither the cable of the anchor runs—where it is fastened ; but she knows that it is fastened behind the veil, which hides the future glory ; and that she, if she only holds on to her anchor, shall in her time be drawn in where it is, into the holiest place, by the hand of the Deliverer."

Just as the waters of the sea cover the earth in which an anchor rests, veiling it from sight, the veil of the Tabernacle shut off from view the Holy of Holies. Even thus does the veil, which death only can remove, hide from us our exalted Saviour, in whom our hope is fixed, and hide also all those whom He is gathering round Himself. Let us think a little more about this.

First, we should reflect on the fact here hinted at—that, as yet, *heaven is veiled* from us.

It is quite true that, as compared with the Old Testament as well as with heathenism, the Lord Jesus has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel ; but, beyond the certainty of heaven, and the assurance that Christ Himself is the centre and ruler of it, we know very little indeed. It is a subject for protracted and sometimes even painful thought—never more so perhaps than in our own day. We live in a questioning age. We ask, far more eagerly than our ancestors did, of everything—What is it? Whence is it? and, Why is it? And when those questions have reference to what is within the veil,

there seems to be no voice, nor any to answer. Meantime our knowledge of physiology and of chemistry and cognate sciences, being far clearer than that of the ancients, we realise more intensely than they did the perishable nature of our bodies ; and I suppose few of us believe, as many formerly did, that the actual elements of the body we lay in the grave will be called together again by Divine power to constitute the new resurrection body. Indeed, I do not think that notion finds any justification in Scripture. Paul speaks about a form which he calls a spiritual body, which, as the servant and manifestor of the soul, will correspond with the present body ; but when he expressly says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God," he surely means to exclude from our minds the idea that physical matter will have any place in it. "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body," he says, and the two are distinct in their essential elements.

Similarly with our knowledge of psychology. It has raised questions which did not trouble our fathers at all in their theories about the future life ; and we are divesting ourselves of some of their notions—that of the unconsciousness of the soul till the general resurrection, for example—although we are getting back, I think, to the far simpler and truer declarations of Scripture, and are dealing more fairly than was sometimes done with its figurative sym-

bolical language. It is easy to see, therefore, that new questions about the future arise, while many an old difficulty reasserts itself; and it is often hard for us to school our hearts to patient waiting for Christ, in whose light alone we shall see light. Suppose, for example, a little babe is taken from your loving embrace; you cannot help following it with many imaginings. You ask yourself, How will he find his way in that mysterious realm? Will angels gather around him, and will they deal more tenderly with the innocent soul than we could do? Will he grow and develop as he would have done if spared on earth, or will he appear as a child to us by-and-by when we enter that land ourselves? Or if you have lost those whom you have known and loved and trusted for years, you are conscious of many a wondering conjecture about them. Where is our dear one now? you ask. What is the special service which is rejoicingly done in the presence of the King? Does that redeemed spirit see us and watch over us still, or is the veil impenetrable on that side as on this? Amid these questionings we find no trustworthy help in the vague and weird utterances of modern spiritualism; and when we turn to this more sure word of testimony, we gain very little light. Indeed, we soon become convinced that for some wise reason it was not the method of Christ and His Apostles to give us any specific or philosophical knowledge of heaven, even although that reticence might lead some to



agnosticism and infidelity. Paul himself—though he was once caught up into the third heavens, and heard words which it was not lawful for a man to utter—made this confession: "Now we see in a mirror darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I have been known." While John—through whom we have the Apocalypse itself, with its splendid imagery and mystic symbols—frankly says: "It does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." In other words, the one thing which is definitely and certainly known about heaven is that Jesus Christ is its centre and its inspiration, and that in His personality is the best revelation to us of its nature and service. Our anchor of hope is sure and steadfast in proportion as it is fixed in Him, the ascended Son of Man, who is the same to-day as He was in His ministry yesterday, and will be the same for ever.

2. Now it appears to me that in these Scriptures we have (so far as the future world is concerned) *appeals to our heart through our imagination*; and I wish to lay stress on this, because we have sometimes involved ourselves in greater darkness through mistaking figures for facts. Take, for example, the graphic picture given us by our Lord of the last Judgment. He surely did not mean us to treat it as if it were a literal description of actual incidents; but He

intended its symbolism to raise in us some conception of transcendent finality, of a time coming when, by Divine law, justice and injustice, right and wrong, will part company once and for ever. Much the same may be said of God-given glimpses of heaven and hell. I do not believe that there will be fire and brimstone in the one, or streets paved with gold in the other ; but that these figures are intended to set forth the woe which follows sin, and the wealth of love and gladness which will come to those who humbly serve their Lord. The fact is, that our Heavenly Father could only use things with which we are familiar in order to give us any notion of what is, and must be till after death, absolutely unfamiliar to us. Nothing else was possible. Suppose you are strolling along the sea-shore with your little child. He sees the waves rolling in over the sand, and as they come in further he notices that you and he are driven gradually nearer to the cliffs, till you are forced to climb them for safety. He knows that the same thing happened yesterday, and the day before, and every day you have been down there. Being of an inquiring mind, he asks you to tell him all about it—in other words, to explain the phenomenon of the tide. You hardly know how to do it. Of course, you might give a scientific dissertation—such as would explain the phenomena very satisfactorily to a well-educated man—but you feel instinctively that will not do. You glance down on

that sage little face and see what a long way below you it is, and then you begin to explain. Perhaps you tell him a story about a shining being up in the sky who looks down on the restless sea and draws its waters, and they run after her till they cannot go any further; and then she says, "Good-bye, I will come to you again to-morrow." Of course, that would be a fable—a figure of speech—but the idea you would get into the child's mind would be nearer the truth than that which he would receive after listening to the clearest exposition of tidal laws by some learned scientist.

Our Heavenly Father wanted to give such an idea of heaven that every one of us could think about it and hope for it—common people, children, and scholars alike—therefore he represented it as being full of all that we love, and free from all we hate and fear; and for the same reason He taught us (so far as we could be taught) by symbols, which will mislead us sadly if we merely analyse and criticise them, but will help us towards the truth if we deal with them reverently and wisely. I remember looking at a lovely picture by Peter Graham. It seemed as if I could almost feel the coolness of the mist creeping round the awful crag and hear the scream of the sea-birds circling about it, and touch the lovely patches of verdure on which glints of sunshine were falling. I wondered how those effects were produced, and walked quite close up to the picture to

examine it. Why, it was made up of streaks and smudges—put on, to all appearances, carelessly enough. And if I had been beside him at his work, and had seen the dabs of pigments on the palette into one after the other of which the brush was dipped, or if I had been told that there was nothing in that picture but pigment and oil on canvas, I should have wondered still more that such an effect should be produced by such elements. But I should not have said "there is no truth in the picture," nor should I have denied that the picture gave my imagination a reliable idea of what I had never seen. Now, I take this Book of the Revelation to be like that picture. Some of you are ready to despise it because when you come to analyse it you say it tells of gates of pearl and streets of gold, and of people bowing, singing, and playing on harps, for ever and ever. Are you wise in this? I hold that your conduct is as sensible as it would be to reduce that picture back to its original pigments and then say with a sneer, we have nothing here worth manly consideration. A sanctified mind will teach you more of real truth than the keenest analytical power. In fact, but for imagination no artist could fashion what has not been; and no scientist could build up great generalisations from a few facts; and no moralist could see in any act something better than the act itself—heroism, love, or glory. Imagination is your interpreting, refining, inspiring faculty, and to it God

largely and wisely addresses Himself in His word. Therefore He gathers together all that men think of as worth gaining in this world—whether gold, or jewels, or stones of price—all that we regard as splendid in crowns and thrones, all the glory which follows the warrior and the music which cheers the sorrowful, all the raptures of love and all the sweetness of purity, all the beauty of rivers and trees and all the wonders of city and country; and these are the pigments on His palette, by the use and combination of which He seeks to show something of the land which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered man's heart to conceive. And this revealed heaven, remember, is not an outward happiness arbitrarily conferred on the elect, but is inward, being intimately associated with faith and obedience on earth. Here we read of redeemed manhood, made perfect after endurance and suffering; after being washed in tears and blood, entering on a sphere intense in its activity and transcendent in its satisfaction, where fellowship with the saints and with the Lord who redeemed them shall be full and everlasting.

Do not question for a moment the certainty of the home of bliss because the details of its economy are hidden behind the veil, and cannot yet be revealed to us as they are. If a bride knew that she was being taken to his own home by the husband to whom she had given herself, she would be glad and hopeful,

although she did not know anything of her future friends or of the arrangements of the house. To her eager questions he might fairly say : Wait till you arrive there. You can surely trust me, to whom you have given yourself. I cannot tell you much more than this—that all will be very different from that to which you have been accustomed. You will find there facilities for blessing others, and means of happiness for yourself, far greater than any you have had yet. Trust me, and wait. Aye, and she would do it. No doubt her imagination would draw many a picture to beguile her on the way ; but if she found they were not exactly like the facts, but were transcended, she would not be disappointed. And to our new home we journey on—faster and faster, as it seems to me, every year ; and though we know but little of what is before us, we are confident and cheerful because of our trust in Him who is to us the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. Knowledge of details, I say, is not necessary in order to a living hope fixed in what lies before us, which, like an anchor, is holding us fast and drawing us nearer. In the old days of slavery, a poor fugitive might know nothing about the pole-star, yet if he saw its gleaming light, and followed after it, he would come as surely to liberty as if he were familiar with all the discoveries of astronomy. Brethren, there is light before us ! God help us to follow it !

I am so sorry for those whose faith in that future is

beclouded, and for those who are indifferent to it, and for those who urge that we should not trust in it, or be found "believing where we cannot prove." If you had once suffered the desolation which follows on the death of some one whom you intensely loved, you would have learned that no other source of comfort can take the place of this ; and if there be no trustworthy revelation that a blessed future awaits God's children, we are, of all creatures He has made, most miserable. But, thank God, we have the sure and certain hope. This veil of mortality, which is opaque enough (as we have said) to hide the actual realities of heaven, is, after all, only a veil, easily lifted for those who pass onward and upward, though it falls again heavily behind them. One after another has thus gone from us, and the departed are living there more vividly and joyously than here ; for there is no more curse nor pain, no more sorrow nor sighing, and God Himself wipes away all tears from their eyes. Let us all think more and more of heaven as a companionable place ; indeed, some of us who have many friends there cannot help doing so. And that is one reason why we rejoice that the imagery in the Book of Revelation is not so complete that we cannot add our own thoughts. We are free to regard it as a sample of the way in which each child of God, taught of the Spirit, may fill in the picture for himself. When we were little children we thought of heaven just as it is portrayed there, flashing with splendour,

redolent with the fragrance of blossoming trees, peopled with white-robed, praiseful saints and angels. But as time went on, and experience of losses came, and we said good-bye to one after another, we had to make room in the heaven of our thoughts for dear ones gone from us. To one of you it is the home where your little child is rejoicing; to another it is the sphere where your father or mother, your husband or wife, is carrying on the work loved full well on earth. And thus, for many of us, familiar faces are there, loving hands, kindly hearts, and holier friendships. Yes, we are glad that God did not make the picture so complete that we could not add to it, as we have done again and again, till it appears to be what it really is—our truest, happiest home.

Well, brethren, let us go back to our ordinary duties with a pilgrim spirit, more conscious than ever that here we have no continuing city, and more resolved than ever to seek one that is to come. Then when we are called to pass within the veil we need not be afraid or troubled about it, but may feel confident of a loving greeting on the other side from those who loved us here; aye, from the King Himself, who loved us always with love stronger than theirs. And let us boldly pray for a spirit of cheerfulness, that we may never allow the thought of death at any time to silence our songs, or rob our hearts of the sunshine in which God wants us to live. No well-bred traveller when in a



foreign land makes too much of his discomforts, because he knows that his home-going is not far away, and the hope of meeting again with those for a little while out of sight is to him God's singing angel in the heart. Therefore look onward, and upward, brightly. "The night is far spent and the day is at hand ; let us, therefore, put off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light," and go on our way rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

"There is a land where every pulse is thrilling  
 With rapture Earth's sojourners may not know,  
 Where Heaven's repose the weary heart is stilling,  
 And peacefully Life's time-tossed currents flow.

Far out of sight, while yet the flesh enfolds us,  
 Lies the fair country where our hearts abide,  
 And of its bliss is nought more wondrous told us,  
 Than these few words, 'I shall be satisfied.'

Satisfied ! satisfied ! The Spirit's yearning  
 For sweet companionship with kindred minds ;  
 The silent love that here meets no returning—  
 The inspiration which no language finds—

Shall they be satisfied ? The soul's vague longing ?  
 The aching void which nothing earthly fills ?  
 Oh, what desires upon my heart are thronging  
 As I look upward to the heavenly hills !"

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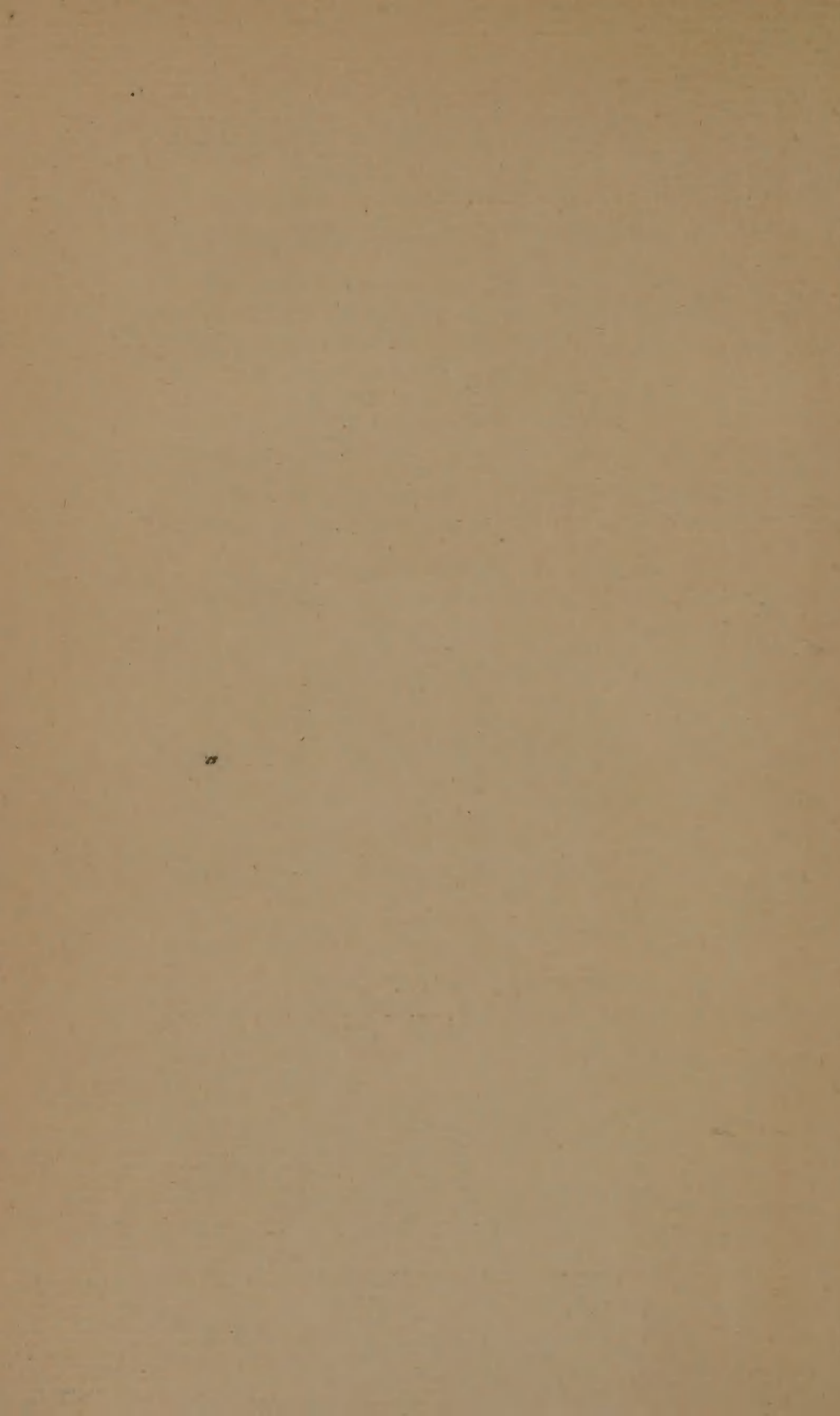
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